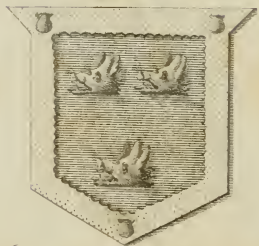


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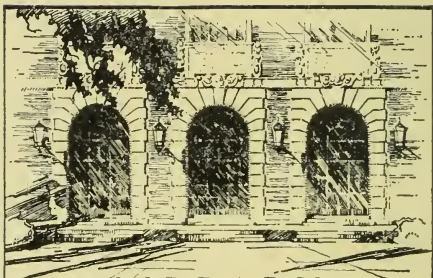
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MAIDS OF HONOUR:

A TALE

OF

THE COURT OF GEORGE I.

"One thing I have got by the long time I have been here, which is, the being more sensible than ever I was of my happiness in being *Maid of Honour*: I wont say 'God preserve me so,' neither; that would not be so well."—SUFFOLK CORRESPONDENCE.

IN THREE VOLS.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER;

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1845.

LONDON :

Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

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MAIDS OF HONOUR.

CHAPTER I.

THE SUPPER OF THE AUTHORS.

Here sauntering prentices o'er Otway weep,
O'er Congreve smile, or over D'Urfey sleep.
Pleased sempstresses the Lock's famed Rape unfold,
And Squirts read Garth till apozems grow old.

GAY.

JACOB TONSON was a happy man. At least he was as near happiness as a bookseller could be. He had sold many books, and he had published a few, and the books he had sold, and the books he had published had turned out equally profitable. Jacob Tonson had a heart; if it did not exactly overflow with "the milk of human kindness," it might boast of an average produce.

Jacob, by the way, intended to put off a settlement till the very last moment—till he paid the only debt with him, as ill-natured people said, certain of an adjustment—the great debt of Nature. Yet he was as active as younger men, particularly where his own interests were concerned; and, though a sober citizen with a staid serious demeanour, and wearing the most simple business like apparel, he could unbend upon an occasion in pleasant company—particularly when he was put to no expense—and appear as fresh and as gay as a cock canary just moulted.

He called for the stock ledger, which, when the boy handed up to him, where he sat on a high stool at a tall desk at the end of his shop—a book nearly as big as himself—Jacob Tonson turned over the folios, carefully looked at the figures at the end of each account, and according as they were on the wrong or right side, pronounced on the eligibility of the party for the invitation.

He found several whose books had not been attended with so favourable a result as had been wished by both parties. Very little consideration was given to them. Indeed, the publisher looked upon them as a sort of lepers in the world of li-

terary enterprise, whom he could not too carefully avoid. Those whose works had been but slightly profitable he hesitated about. Small profits were but small virtues in the eyes of Jacob Tonson; his philanthropy might induce him to pay such persons the compliment of an invitation, but he felt, honest man, he could not esteem them.

Where the figures showed handsome returns, the eyes of the bookseller seemed to expand with the excess of his admiration. The names on the top of each page were such as Jacob delighted to honour. They belonged to men against whom not a word could be said; they formed the *libro d'oro* in use "at the sign of the Shakspeare's Head over against Catherine Street in the Strand."

The invitations were at last sent out, and Jacob Tonson in the fullness of his satisfaction at the goodness of the deed he had determined on, opened his heart to one or two of his best customers whilst, as usual, they were gossiping with him in the shop respecting books and their authors. Whether he succeeded in all instances in impressing upon these persons a full sense of his extreme amiability, has not been ascertained. One individual, at least, took a decided interest

in the subject. He was the reader's very fashionable acquaintance Handsome Hervey, who besides putting forth the indisputable pretensions we have recorded as the best dressed gentleman at Court, aspired to know and be known in the world of literature. He was often at the bookseller's; but as he came to buy, he was of course a welcome visitor. Jacob was proud of such a customer, and frequently endeavoured to entertain him with some of his abundant reminiscences of Pope, Addison, Swift, and other literary magnates of his acquaintance.

Handsome Hervey appeared delighted with the notion of Jacob Tonson's "supper of the authors," as he was pleased to style the proposed banquet. The milk of human kindness must have been very creamy in Jacob at that moment, for he cordially asked the beau to join the company, and promised to direct his attention to the most distinguished of the many celebrated characters he should have the honour of entertaining. His Lordship seemed prodigiously grateful; and as some acknowledgment of so great a favour, ordered half-a-dozen of the worthy bookseller's most unsaleable publications.

At the period we are seeking to illustrate, no-

blemen were not generally such rigid conservators of their dignity as they assume to be now ; and eccentricity was thought a valid plea for conduct which in these days would be pronounced extremely *infra dig.* It should also be remembered, that though Jacob Tonson kept a shop, he was a highly respectable personage ; possessed a country house at Barnes, and as Secretary to the Kit-Kat club was on friendly terms with its members, and among the guests that his Lordship had been invited to meet, were several gentlemen who were in the habit of associating with some of the most distinguished persons in the kingdom.

On the appointed evening, the beau, dressed with as much care as if he were about to pay a visit to his mistress, was set down from his sedan, at the sign of the Shakspeare's Head. Finding the shop closed, he knocked, and was presently admitted by the boy, who bawled his name in a penny-trumpet voice, that gave no slight shock to the gentleman's sense of dignity. As he was passing into the supper-room, ushered by the housekeeper with her best curtesy, and her most cordial smile, Jacob hailed him from the stairs without his wig, in his shirt sleeves, and with one shoe and one slipper on, and begged he

would sit down for two or three minutes, till he had completed his toilet.

Finding he was the first arrival, Handsome Hervey amused himself by inspecting the preparations for the coming entertainment. To the fastidious fine gentleman of the Court, there was much in these preparations that excited his astonishment. A capacious table had been covered with its table cloth, and furnished with a long row of knives and forks, varying so much in their appearance, as to suggest to the observer the idea of their all belonging to different parishes. Pewter pepper-castors, and white delf salt-cellars were to be seen at each corner, flanked with large pewter spoons; except at the head of the table, where a pair of table-spoons of genuine silver, were ostentatiously paraded for the sole use and benefit of the most profitable of Jacob Tonson's guests.

Occasionally there entered the room the sturdy porter in his Sunday suit :—a large paper copy of humanity in plain binding; the slim boy, in a duodecimo pepper-and-salt jacket, with yellow smalls; and the tall housekeeper in her best grogram gown, looking like a quarto pamphlet in a neat cover. Used to the royal livery, and royal ser-

vitors, " Handsome Hervey," scrutinized the, to him, singular appearance and awkward movements of his host's domestics, as though he doubted in his own mind amongst what strange animals he had ventured. They appeared to be marvellously busy about the supper arrangements; but as they invariably glanced to where the silver spoons were placed, the beau could not but think their visits arose from their anxiety for the safety of so unusual a part of their master's table service. He laughed a little at his thoughts, and would have laughed a great deal more had he known the long debate that had been held between his careful host, and his equally careful housekeeper on the production of those articles of the precious metal. The good woman seemed to be afraid they might prove too great a temptation for some of the company; but her master trusted in Providence and his own sharp eyes, and had decided on letting the silver appear.

The room was far from being extensive, and a considerable portion was now taken up by several large parcels in brown paper, which were either supplies of books ready for immediate demand, or parcels of those publications for which a ready sale was not anticipated. They had not been re-

moved because there was no convenient place to which to remove them ; and it was thought by Jacob Tonson that they might be left where they were without creating any fear of their being carried off by his guests.

Handsome Hervey had just completed his survey, when his host entered in a new wig, and a coat almost as good as new. In short, Jacob Tonson looked extremely respectable :—a new edition of himself revised and corrected. He was particularly courteous in his welcome to his fashionable visitor, and then glanced at the table with the air of a man not inclined to be too proud, yet having a full appreciation of his own greatness.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed Jacob, with that peculiar sense of satisfaction a great mind experiences when engaged in a great cause, “ this cannot but prove a delightful entertainment. A classic symposium, my Lord Hervey, in which minds that belong to the highest order of intellects shall associate, and elicit those divine sparks which arise only when genius comes in collision with genius. Is the beef nearly done, Mrs. Skewball ? ” the speaker suddenly demanded, as his portly housekeeper entered the room. The reply satisfied the master of the feast, and he went on.

“I shall have an opportunity of introducing your Lordship to some of the lights of the age:—lights that are destined under my humble auspices, to illumine the world. For instance there is my epic poet, Mr. Tagrhyme. Wonderful man!—marvellous capacity!—surprising imagination!—extraordinary invention! A sort of man, my Lord Hervey, made up of the several excellences of Homer, Virgil, Tasso, and Milton. I was the fortunate publisher of his admirable,—I may say matchless—epic, the “The Day of Judgment,” in twenty books; an intellectual marvel—an achievement in letters not to be paralleled in a century. Yes, my Lord Hervey, you shall see the great Mr. Tagrhyme; and your children’s children may boast of the honour you will have received.

“And your Lordship shall see the pious Dr. Stifftext, whose last volume of sermons may be referred to as an invaluable digest of Christian doctrine. Admirable divine;—rare theologian! pre-eminent preacher! And then too your Lordship will enjoy the opportunity of forming the acquaintance of the truly illustrious Heavypage, the learned author of the ‘The History of the World before the Flood,’ and ‘The Secret Memoirs

of the Preadamite Kings.' Stupendous learning! —invincible reasoning! —boundless knowledge!"

Handsome Hervey had heard nothing of these prodigies. Although he occasionally elevated his eye-brows as he looked and listened, it seemed to his host that he looked forward with immense gratification to the society so ostentatiously promised him.

"I must not forget," continued the worthy bookseller, "the marvellous scholar, Dr. Drybones, the professor of Greek Literature, whose volume on the "Pleasures and Advantages of studying the true Athenian Pronunciation" is a masterpiece of erudition. With him will doubtless come Slipslop, the romance writer, whose "Innocent Adultery" in ten volumes has been so well received. Pretty writer, my Lord Hervey; very pretty writer, indeed. Understands the human heart. Must be immortal!" Then he hastily added, turning suddenly round, "Tell Mrs. Skewball to be sure to mind the orders I gave her about the punch."

"Yes, Sir," said the boy in yellow smalls, to whom the last sentence of Jacob Tonson's speech was addressed on his entering the room with the snuffers.

“Then, my Lord, I expect Trounce, the satirist, and Bumblebee, the pamphleteer. Powerful writers, my Lord. Wonderful, powerful writers! Every body reads them. They exercise a vast influence over public opinion. Trounce is a bitter rogue who abuses every body, and of course every body runs to see what is said about him. Bumblebee is a patriot; writes inflammatory essays to shew that ruin is impending over the nation, and of course, with the whole nation is vastly popular.”

In the same enthusiastic strain Jacob Tonson proceeded to mention the rest of his expected guests, and Handsome Hervey appeared particularly well pleased to recognise amongst them names so familiar as Addison, De Foe, Dean Swift, Sir Richard Steele, and Sir John Vanbrugh. He had also invited Mr. Pope, as he took care to inform his new friend: but that gentleman had excused himself on the plea of sudden indisposition. This disappointment, however, he had been enabled to qualify, by having, during the last four-and-twenty hours, secured as a guest a distinguished foreigner, who, though not exactly an author, had considerable taste in the *Belles Lettres*, and was deservedly famous for his skill

in one of the polite arts; this person was the fashionable portrait painter, Sir Godfrey Kneller.

The beau had scarcely been made acquainted with these particulars, to which he listened with well-affected curiosity, when the guests began to arrive. Jacob knew his business too well to cry stinking-fish; and though some of his manufactures were in much less demand than others, he took care to give even the worst that degree of commendation that might influence a purchaser. Nevertheless, his Lordship, in an indirect way, managed to elicit as nearly as possible the degrees of estimation in which they all stood with their publisher, and the causes that led to such variation.

But had he been at a loss, the manner in which Jacob Tonson received his guests would have opened his eyes to the real state of the case. To the Small Profits he behaved like a patron. He was not only civil, he was gracious; and there was a sort of benignity in his condescension, that declared how much he thought it was his duty to notice those writers in his employ who did not happen to be so fortunate in their undertakings as others. But yet there was something in his bearing that

plainly told them he knew his own value as well as theirs.

Jacob discriminated in an ingenious sliding-scale, according to the productiveness of the parties, till he arrived at the great men whose names sold editions almost as rapidly as they could be printed. With these he never thought of attempting the familiarity with which he treated the Small Profits. He welcomed Mr. Addison with the respect due to a prince; whilst the epic poet, who, notwithstanding the laboured eulogy he had uttered, sold very slowly, was obliged to be contented with a careless "Ha! Tagrhyme, how are ye, my boy?"

His Lordship was introduced in due form to all the authors as they made their appearance. He had previously made the acquaintance of Addison and Sir John Vanbrugh; and after his own peculiar fashion contrived to join in conversation with the caustic Dean and the humourous Steele, whilst the feast was getting ready. Most of them assembled together in little groups, discussing the news of the King's journey to Hanover; of the singular disappearance, and still more strange recovery of the Maid of Honour; and of the expected trial of Bishop Atterbury

in the House of Peers : and some violent politicians were very severe upon the South Sea Scheme, which had already excited considerable distrust in the public mind.

The gaunt figure of the epic poet stood apart, his cadaverous visage looking abstracted, as, with his arms crossed, he gazed upon the ceiling. The theologian sat at a little distance, as though he beheld the most orthodox of religious systems definitely settled in his shoe-buckles. The pamphleteer and the satirist were declaiming to each other on the vices of society ; and ministers were spoken of by them in about as courteous terms as a discharged valet would mention his master ; but as one lisped and the other stammered, their language was not very readily understood.

Jacob Tonson went from one to another, laughing freely with the illustrious obscure, and exhibiting the most amiable deference to such as Fame had entered in his *libro d'oro*. He hung upon the words of the two chief contributors to the Spectator, as though they were as manna to his soul ; the architect of Blenheim uttered a few jokes, which would scarcely have been thought good enough for the dullest of his plays, yet Jacob enjoyed them

immensely. The author of *Gulliver's Travels* could not mention the most simple circumstance, but Jacob was convinced there was hidden satire in it, and he severely taxed the small power of his brain to find it out; even the little attempts at a jest made in unintelligible English by the fashionable foreign portrait painter appeared to obtain from him the fullest appreciation.

At last the labours of Mrs. Skewball, the house-keeper, of the porter turned butler, and of the boy footman, had progressed as far as placing the viands on the table; and the company heard the welcome words "Supper is ready." Handsome Hervey was not long in discovering that his host had applied his sliding-scale appreciation to the supper arrangement. At the head of the table, where Jacob and his great friends sat, there were the delicacies of the season; good substantial fare was to be found at the middle of the table, and economy reigned supreme at the lower end. Those gentlemen whose works obtained immense success might indulge in venison; the authors who could only lay claim to a more moderate sale, might enjoy their boiled beef; but the Small Profits were expected to rest content on tripe and cow-heel.

Jacob Tonson, happy man ! prided himself on the felicity of this arrangement. It was a master-stroke of policy ; and as he carved with respectful attention for the distinguished persons around him, he felt the most ecstatic satisfaction at the prospect he beheld of enjoying, to his heart's content, his favourite cut in the alderman's walk, as soon as he had served the six or seven privileged individuals for whom the venison had been intended.

His Lordship, Sir Godfrey, Sir Richard, and Sir John, had been attended to with a due pronunciation of their titles ; the Dean was as carefully provided for ; Addison and De Foe were also of the privileged few : but below them, the host never thought of proceeding. To his extreme astonishment, however, although the boiled beef was right before him, the pamphleteer sent up his plate for venison. Bumblebee was not a person to be offended, and the haunch was carved for him without a word ; the satirist, also, actually did the same thing. Of Trounce, Jacob stood in considerable awe ; and he thought it prudent to postpone his own attentions to the haunch till he had satisfied his formidable friend's inclinations.

He could hardly believe his eyes or his ears when, immediately afterwards, Slipslop, in the coolest manner possible, told the boy in yellow smalls to bring him "some of the haunch." Jacob could not make it out at all. The boiled beef was so near Slipslop, he might help himself; and there seemed to him no slight presumption in a romance writer asking for venison. But Jacob thought it might seem ungracious to refuse, and therefore complied to the extraordinary request with the best grace he could assume.

Greater surprises were in store for him. Not only did Dr. Drybones follow the examples so ably set him; but the tripe and cow-heel obtained no more attention than the beef, for even the epic poet and the theologian had the impertinence to send the boy footman for a supply from the top of the table. The milk of human kindness in Jacob Tonson began to turn a little sour at such prodigious ingratitude; but when he heard the hollow voice of Tagrhyme, after he had been helped to a delicious slice with a fair allowance of gravy, asking *for a taste of the fat*, he really felt himself entertaining an extremely ill opinion of human nature. That an epic poet whose work scarcely paid its expenses, should

not be satisfied with a choice between tripe and cow-heel, was marvellous. If his ambition had soared to the boiled beef, he should have considered it monstrous bad taste, but submitted to it as an eccentricity of genius; but to dare to think of venison, and having dared, to exceed all belief, by asking for "a taste of the fat," was an atrocity altogether unparalleled.

Jacob made a solemn determination never to invite an epic poet to his table again. He was half inclined to give up publishing for such persons; but Jacob would not allow himself to be so unjust, particularly as he might be a considerable loser by it. He would, however, be very careful of entering into any further speculations with Tagrhyme, notwithstanding the very high opinion he had expressed of his writings.

The treatment the hospitable bookseller had met with from some of his authors would have prevented his eating, had he not refrained longer than usual from breaking his fast, that he might have the greater enjoyment in the flavour of his beloved "alderman's walk." He was now about to commence satisfying his appetite, when he chanced to observe that his distinguished friends near him again required his services as carver,

except his noble friend on his right, who strange to say had scarcely eat a mouthful.

"My Lord, you don't eat!" exclaimed the hospitable host, marvelling greatly his prime joint should be so little appreciated by his principal guest. "I hope the venison's to your Lorship's liking?"

"Oh, ah! yes, Tonson," drawled out the Exquisite, with an imperturbable countenance. "I eat, I thank you, Tonson; but I never go beyond two mouthfuls of animal food—never, Tonson, never."

Addison and one or two more, who knew his Lordship's affectations, could not forbear smiling; but the Dean laughed aloud.

"By Jove! that's just my way, or very near it," he exclaimed, "I seldom take more than a mouthful or two of such diet; but then it should be remembered, I take prodigious good care first to *meat* the demands of my appetite."

"Appetite, Mr. Dean," cried the Beau, with a sort of puzzled air, that much increased the mirth of his laughing neighbours. "What is an appetite?"

"Will you take a little beef, my Lord?" said or rather shouted the learned Heavypage, from

the middle of the table, not exactly understanding what was going on above him.

“Beef, Sir!” exclaimed his Lordship, as if as much astonished as indignant at having such an inquiry directed to him. “You ought to know, Sir, that I never eat beef, Sir, nor horse, Sir, nor any of those things, Sir.”

“This is capital venison, Mr. Tonson,” cried Addison, as if to divert attention from the ludicrous announcement that had just been uttered.

“A very fine haunch,” observed Vanbrugh.

“Couldn’t be better,” added Steele.

Jacob smiled, and chatted, and assumed to be greatly delighted at the praises that were lavished upon the fast disappearing haunch from one end of the table to the other; for even the sepulchral voice of the author of “The Day of Judgment” joined in these tantalising commendations. The milk of human kindness got extremely acidulous, for though far from being a spiteful man, the hospitable bookseller secretly wished the venison might choke him.

Jacob carved for the three knights, he carved for the Dean, and he carved for his celebrated friends, Addison and De Foe; but if he thought there his labours were to end and his enjoyments

begin, he was never more mistaken. The tiger who tastes blood is never satisfied till he has devoured his victim. So it was with those who had just become acquainted with the flavour of venison. One after another like the horse-leech, they cried "give! give!" and Jacob suffering a martyrdom of disgust and indignation, saw the whole haunch disappear down their voracious jaws without obtaining a morsel for himself. The epic poet having with a greediness he considered truly horrible, applied for the last piece.

Jacob Tonson looked unutterable things. He found too late instead of having a King Log, he had set up a King Stork in the voracious Tag-rhyme, who filled the chair at the opposite end of the table. He did not think that any bookseller had ever been so ill used by his authors and the enormity of the Small Profits had such an effect upon him, that for some time he found himself unable to commence his supper. He tried to look pleased. He did his best to get up a laugh at the Dean's jests. He endeavoured to pay a proper degree of attention to the pleasant anecdotes of Sir Richard Steele. He made believe he was interested in the account Sir John Vanbrugh was giving Sir Godfrey Kneller, of the

dispute in which he was involved with the Marlboroughs, respecting his claim for the services he had rendered in erecting their stately mansion at Woodstock. He even allowed his neighbours to imagine he was absorbed in a lively discussion going on between Addison and De Foe; but he was otherwise employed. He could not get rid of the unpleasant feelings that had been excited in his breast, by the atrocious conduct of the epic poet.

After some time had elapsed, he made up his mind to be contented with a slice or two of the boiled beef. As soon as the great attraction at the top of the supper table became reduced to a mere bone, a very brisk attack commenced upon the small centre joint, led on by the pamphleteer and satirist. From such examples the theologian and the Greek professor were not slow in profiting; their neighbours helped them with extraordinary zeal, and the beef was soon seen to be rapidly going the way of the haunch.

The host looked for the boy in yellow smalls to take his plate; but the boy in yellow smalls was at that moment too busily engaged in licking his fingers after putting them into a jam tart, to care for the wants of his master. Jacob knew

the sturdy porter was then assisting the portly housekeeper, and he saw all his neighbours so completely occupied by their conversation, that he could not make up his mind to interrupt them.

Just then an appeal was made to him by his intelligent friend De Foe, respecting the point he was discussing with Mr. Addison, and the matter took up his attention for several minutes. As it terminated, the boy in yellow smalls entered with a very smeary mouth, and received his master's plate and directions for boiled beef. Alas for Jacob Tonson! the hungry authors at the other end of the table had, by this time, stripped the small joint of every thing eatable. To add to the already brimming cup of his indignation, the epic poet insisted on sending him some of the untouched tripe, to which he invited him with a degree of exulting cordiality, that made his voice a thousand times more hateful to his patron than before.

The worthy bookseller tried to pick a bit of the tripe; for he had scarcely eat anything all day; but it had got cold, and appeared so unpalatable, that Jacob after vainly endeavouring to conquer his feelings found himself obliged to send his plate

away. The portly housekeeper and the sturdy porter quickly removed the meats for the pastry; and a rich plum pudding at top, an excellent apple pie in the centre, and a dish of plain dumplings at the end, again betrayed to the observant beau the graduated estimation in which Jacob Tonson held his authors. But the hospitable bookseller had again the mortification of finding his able arrangements set at nought. The plum pudding and then the pie were devoured; but the dumplings were sent away untouched.

Jacob having learned by experience the unprofitableness of neglecting himself, had taken care to transfer to his own plate a liberal slice of the rich plum pudding; but just as he had succeeded in doing so, the Dean drew off his attention by some question respecting the sale of his books, which having answered he turned to enjoy his pudding, and was just in time to see the boy in yellow smalls handing his plate with its rich contents to the insatiate Tagrhyme.

The unfortunate host in fact eat no supper. He still made superhuman efforts to appear pleased, but his smile was distorted and his laugh hysterical. One consolation, however, remained to him. He knew he had arranged the drink-

ing part of the feast in a manner that could not allow of the lower end of the table acting so scandalously as they had done with the eatables. It was his unprejudiced opinion that the Small Profits ought to be satisfied with small beer; but on such an occasion he thought he would allow the milk of human kindness its full influence, and directed they should be furnished with a more generous malt liquor; and moreover, after the meal he had provided them with a bowl of punch, of the size of that which should be placed at the same time at the head of the table. There was, however, a slight difference between the two bowls, which may as well be mentioned; and this was that the contents of one had not half the strength of the other.

After thanksgiving had been made by the Dean, the bowls were placed one at each end of the table, and glasses were filled as expeditiously as possible. The conversation was beginning to be extremely animated; and Jacob made a powerful effort to get rid of his disagreeable feelings. In the immediate neighbourhood of such choice spirits as Swift, Steele, Vanbrugh, and the rest of his honoured friends, any bookseller might feel delighted. A smart fire of jests already made itself

heard, and the reign of pleasant anecdote had commenced. Jacob filled for all this amusing circle, and then proposed a loyal toast, without in the least betraying the state of his feelings. The toast was responded to very readily; but a singular circumstance followed; for as his immediate neighbours put down their glasses, they appeared to glance at each other with rather a strange expression of countenance. In fact, the Dean winked at Steele, and Sir John Vanbrugh looked at his glass in a peculiar manner.

“Come, Sir Godfrey,” said Steele, nudging his elbow, “I must get you to exercise your well known penetration in matters of taste, and tell the company why, on excellent authority, we should consider this bowl of punch peculiarly blessed.”

“I not know—I not know at all,” replied the artist with a shrug. “*Mon Dieu!* I am not possible to tell vat de bowl of punch shall be blessed for; unless it shall be for having such good companie.”

“Not exactly.”

“Vell den tell me; for I am mosh too stoopid to guess.”

“Haven’t we been told that ‘blessed are the

poor in spirit;' and surely never was punch so well qualified for a blessing."

The laugh was loud and general, and the Dean joined in it as heartily as any; but Addison uttered a gentle reproof to his friend for the profanity of his jest.

Jacob Tonson could not exactly understand what was meant; but he was not long allowed to remain in ignorance; for the boy in yellow smalls suddenly made his appearance at his elbow and said to him in a whisper that might be heard by all in the room, "Please, Sir, Mrs. Skewball says they've got the best bowl at t'other end o' the table."

Jacob cast an agonising glance in that direction, and could easily perceive, by the delighted countenances he there beheld, as the happy authors waited for their glasses to be replenished, that such a mistake had been made, and that the Small Profits were absolutely enjoying the strong punch made for his own select circle. This was the finishing blow. The unhappy bookseller became quite desperate. He sent for the spirit bottles, and scarcely knowing what he was about, made his own bowl as strong again as that of which he had been, as he considered, so infamously deprived;

and when it was exhausted made another equally excellent. Of these he drank as often as he could fill his glass, and of how many more he partook there is no knowing ; for as he drank freely on an empty stomach, he soon became extremely singular in his proceedings.

The last thing of which he was conscious, was hearing Tagrhyme reciting a favourite passage from the last book of "The Day of Judgment ;" whilst the theologian, in a similar state of pleasant excitement, was singing an extremely uproarious kind of song, in which the whole of the Small Profits joined in a very noisy chorus.

The amiable host was carried up to bed in a state of insensibility, whilst his friends below were emptying his spirit bottles in repeated bowls, and in other ways amusing themselves at the expense of their entertainer. Handsome Hervey and the more select party at the head of the table separated at a reasonable hour, and enjoyed themselves moderately. Of the many witty things that were said by them, it is vain attempting to give the reader anything like an adequate idea ; we can only say that Addison acknowledged he had passed the pleasantest evening he had known since his ambitious marriage with the Countess of

Warwick ; and the Dean made a humorous report of it in doggrel verse, for the amusement of his fair friend "Stella." The rest of the company, however, having voted the epic poet into the chair the Dean had vacated, chose to keep it up ; and as long as there remained anything in the bottles, they continued to astonish the domestic staff of their publisher with the extravagance of their joviality.

The first sensation the unfortunate Jacob Tonsen experienced, was one of intense fear. He imagined himself to be the Prophet Jonah on the point of being cast from a ship, whilst a whale, with the hateful features of the epic poet, lay beneath ready to swallow him at a mouthful. He woke in affright—to fall asleep again, to fancy himself St. George engaged in mortal combat with the Dragon on a steep rock ; but the immense reptile had the best of it ; and just as he came, distending his monstrous jaws, belging fire and brimstone, to take him at a mouthful, he again recognized the cadaverous look of Tagrhyme, and it gave so terrible a shock to his system that he fell out of bed, and under the impression he had fallen down a precipice, raised such an outcry as made the boy in yellow smalls tremble in his

pallet under the counter, fully convinced that thieves had broken into the house.

In justice to Jacob, we must add that he soon became reconciled to his epic poet, and to the rest of his guests, whose seeming abuse of his kindness had produced so powerful an effect upon him; nay more, very shortly after his memorable "supper of the authors," he was again "on hospitable thoughts intent." He had the wisdom this time, however, and ever after, to dispense with all invidious distinctions. He played the part of the generous host to every one at his table; and it is to be hoped, though there exists some evidence to the contrary, at last made himself famous amongst his literary friends for his considerateness towards them as much on business as on festive occasions.

CHAPTER II.

A COURT PASTORAL.

How would the crook beseem thy lily hand ?
How would my younglings, gazing round thee, stand ?
Oh ! witless younglings, gaze not on her eye,
Thence all my sorrow, thence the death I die.

AMBROSE PHILIPS.

OF the many lovely places in the neighbourhood of Richmond, Hampton Court, if not the most delightful for its scenery, is undoubtedly so for its associations. The palace of the great Cardinal, a building so stamped with his master-mind, had been greatly approved of by George I ; and when he left the country for his Hanoverian dominions, his son made it his summer residence.

The Prince having been appointed Guardian of

the Kingdom, was invested with all the state and authority of King : indeed the Court, through the influence of the Princess, was more brilliant than it had ever been under the government of her father-in-law : there being a brilliant staff of lords, equerries, grooms, sergeants-at-arms, gentlemen pensioners, pages, and other officers of the household in attendance on the Prince ; and of course, as gay an assemblage of ladies, maids of honour, and other gentlewomen attending on the Princess.

Her Royal Highness seemed disposed to make the most of her new honours, though she had no slight difficulty in getting her consort to play the dignified part she desired. He had little taste for ceremonies, and particularly disliked all the encumbrances of state. He cared as little for the luxuries of his high position ; for he chose to sleep on a hair-mattrass, and was always the plainest dressed man in the royal apartments. When obliged to play his part in the imposing spectacles of royalty, he did so with ill-disguised disinclination, with awkward bearing, and with a countenance expressive of anything but graciousness or satisfaction. Yet he could employ some efforts to render himself agreeable. He took

a vast deal of pains to recommend himself to the youthful beauties in attendance on his consort, proceeding even so far as to sing amorous French songs to them; which however, it ought not to be forgotten were more likely to spoil their ears than corrupt their morals.

He was amazingly civil to all of them: but distinguished most Mary Bellenden and Mary Lepel, to whom he was most assiduous with his clumsy gallantries. The girls laughed at him. His royalty was not likely to influence them in their affections; for though he seemed ambitious of being taken for a rake, he was the least seductive of any who possessed that character.

The Princess did not condescend to notice her lord's attention to her attendants; but she took care, soon after her elevation, to read them a very sensible lesson on their behaviour to his Royal Highness, in the presence of her "good Howard," against whom some of her reflections and observations fell in a manner not at all unlikely to create an extremely uncomfortable impression. She busied herself with a hundred things she thought necessary to keep up her consort's and her own importance; at one moment patronizing the learned, at another ingratiating herself with

her ladies, at a third rendering herself as popular as possible with the great body of the English people.

Her Royal Highness dined in public, allowing any person to enter the state apartments at the time she was being served in strict accordance with etiquette, on the knee, by three of her ladies, her cupbearer, carver, and sewer. It formed a most imposing ceremonial ; and her allowing the public admission to it, greatly increased the popularity of the Court. There was nothing but hatred and contempt heaped upon the ugly minions of the sovereign ; but the people seemed now never tired of expressing their admiration of the Princess of Wales and her ladies.

The Maids of Honour were in the highest estimation at Hampton Court ; they were much favoured by the Princess ; they were the constant objects of the Prince's regard, and they were wonderfully esteemed by the courtiers. The Brigadier's daughter, in consequence of her recent adventure, was more than ever the subject of conversation, and of the assiduous attentions of three or four of the most desirable beaux the palace could boast of.

The Duke of Wharton fancied he was gaining

ground. He had omitted nothing which might have assisted his views upon the youthful beauty, and believed that his tender assiduities had made a favourable impression. He took care always to be in the front rank of her numerous suitors, and did his best to make them believe he possessed her favour.

Next came Philip Dormer, seeking less ostentatiously to make his way to the heart of the Brigadier's daughter. His gallantries were of the most graceful kind. They displayed all a courtier's elegance, with the refinement of an accomplished mind. They were more dangerous than the more impassioned attentions of the profligate young Duke, whose fervour, however, after the first impression, was thrown away upon a nature so remarkable for its delicacy as that of Mary Lepel.

The Duke of Buckingham, whenever his gout would permit, was equally ready to enter into the field; and though he never failed to deride the amorous glances and tender speeches of his wheezing rival, the Duke of Somerset, who, to do him justice, repaid his derision with interest, he sought every occasion that presented itself to recommend himself to the notice of the young Maid of Honour as the most devoted of her adorers.

The conduct of these antiquated Lotharios still afforded an inexhaustible fund of amusement to their younger rivals; but they did not shrink from running the gauntlet of jests their folly brought upon them. Indeed they seemed delighted with any notice that was taken of their amorous vagaries.

Other gentlemen presented themselves in the suite of the youthful beauty, and considered their attentions well repaid if they managed to obtain a smile or a look. If, by some fortunate chance, one succeeded in handing her to her chair, in recovering a dropped pocket-handkerchief, or in restoring a strayed lap-dog, he was made happy for a month, and did not fail to let it be known at his club how mightily he had been favoured by "the matchless Molly Lepel."

Mary Bellenden too, continued to draw around her a throng of lovers such as ought to have made her amends for all that she had lost in leaving Paris; and as in the case of her fair schoolfellow, amongst them were to be found gallants of all ages, from the old Lord Chamberlain, whose compliments savoured somewhat too strongly of dotage, to the boyish Page whom a kind word or a sweet smile metamorphosed into an adorer.

Indeed she had at Hampton Court full employment for those inimitable fascinations her French education had procured for her ; and the crowd of gay courtiers who flocked to the palace as soon as it became known that the Prince possessed the sovereign power, buzzed about the Maids of Honour like a swarm of bees upon a parterre of choice flowers.

The Prince became more warm in his attentions, and, as a natural consequence Colonel Argyle more distant. In fact his Royal Highness, though he gave a due share of his peculiar compliments to each of the Court beauties, bestowed them so impressively upon Lord Bellenden's daughter, no one could help coming to the conclusion that he entertained a passion for her. The Colonel saw this as clearly as the shrewdest gossip at Court. He saw also how completely his mistress was besieged by admirers ; and not wishing to be lost in the crowd, he withdrew to a distance, as if he had completely given up the pursuit.

Sophy Howe was as dashing and reckless as ever ; she also had her train ; and they were, as usual, the least creditable suitors so young and lovely a creature could have had about her. The

age, however, was far from being discriminative, and Sophy Howe was among the most heedless of her sex. She allowed the attentions of a crowd of well-known rakes ; laughed with them, jested with them, and flirted with them all in turn. Though very few women of quality were remarkable for propriety of conduct, the daughter of General Howe behaved so strangely that it drew upon her the well-intentioned reproof of an elderly Duchess, who was high in the confidence of the Princess.

“ My dear child,” she observed, on hearing her mention something extremely improper, “ I assure you, you could not have done a worse thing.”

“ Nay, I protest to your Grace,” replied she very readily, “ I could do a great many worse things.”

The Princess, in her mild and amiable manner was also induced to make some observations ; to which the giddy girl paid just as little respect.

Anthony Lowther was still in full pursuit. He saw he had many competitors for the prize ; but he proceeded with that skill which long experience had taught him. He managed to be as frequently by her side as possible, and breathed

into her ear those insidious flatteries he knew to be most effective with such dispositions. She laughed and jested with him as well as with the rest; but he fancied there was a difference in her manner towards him. Her eyes seemed to shrink from his glances; and the tones of her voice occasionally betrayed a tenderness which he regarded as a sure sign his skilful approaches had had the desired effect. He had only to improve his opportunities, and the prize was won.

As for Fanny Meadows, no alteration had taken place in her. Many gay courtiers, attracted by her beauty, became civil to her; but they were soon repelled by her prudery from making further advances. It had become a regular jest with the Court wits, who had enjoyed her society the longest, to prevail on every stranger on his entering their circle, to pay particular attention to Fanny Meadows, for the purpose of witnessing his mortification at the manner in which his advances were sure to be received.

The Princess was extremely partial to her Maids of Honour, and was always particularly kind to Mary Lepel:—this had greatly increased since her escape from Baron Bothmar, for her Royal Highness seemed sensible that she had

been the cause of the critical position in which her young friend had been placed. When not absorbed by her metaphysical disquisitions, or religious arguments, their considerate mistress appeared never so well pleased as when encouraging some scheme for the amusement of her ladies in attendance.

It happened, that among the innumerable tastes which the Princess possessed, or thought she possessed, a taste for poetry was not the least powerful, and in its development she chose to display some very curious fancies. On one occasion she commanded that a day should be devoted to rural enjoyments in "the true Arcadian simplicity," and insisted that all her ladies should assume the costume of shepherdesses, while a select circle of gentlemen should represent shepherds. A fine lawn on a declivity, in a retired part of the palace-gardens, possessing several appropriate statues, and a fountain, was the place selected for the performance. There was to be a little rivalry in music and poetry, after the old classic models, and her Royal Highness had endeavoured to secure a favourable day.

As far as the weather was concerned it proved as delightful a day as ever belonged to an English

summer. Some tall trees flung a pleasant shadow on the grass, as if for a retreat when the sun became too powerful. A sort of rustic bower or throne was made for the accommodation of the Princess, where she took her seat about noon, dressed in a costume sufficiently pastoral for a royal shepherdess. In short, she would have made an admirable frontispiece to Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*.

At her side was the indefatigable gossip, the Duke of Devonshire, availing himself of every reference of her Royal Highness to any absent person, to acquaint her with the secret history of his or her grandmother, or still more remote ancestor. He wore a pea-green spencer with sky blue breeches and stockings, with his wig tied with ribbons of the same colour.

On the other side of her Royal Highness was Handsome Hervey. The Princess had insisted upon his attendance; indeed it was remarked that she never allowed of any amusement, in which the fashionable beau was not included. Whether she thought that his presence would confer fashion on her entertainments, or whether his ultra refinement amused her, we cannot now stop to determine; but it is certain Handsome Hervey

was always present by command at every little fête in which her Royal Highness chose to indulge. It might have been noticed as strange that he never took an active part in these entertainments. His proverbial taciturnity, and avoidance of even the slightest trouble was never more conspicuous than on such occasions. He generally stood in near attendance upon his royal mistress, looking languidly on whatever amusement was going forward, and drawling out some remark, ludicrous from its excess of affectation—and then only by way of reply.

On the present occasion, he was dressed if possible with more elegance than was usual with him. His pastoral suit being of the most graceful shape and handsome material; and could he have been divested of that excessive foppishness and effeminacy, that made him so marked a character, he might have passed for an Apollo. No one knew but himself and his tailor the immense pains that had been taken to render him the most irresistible of Strephons; indeed from the shape of his locks to the colour of his stockings every portion of his apparel had undergone the most elaborate preparation.

There was a slope in the lawn, on the velvet

turf of which reclined the Maids of Honour in graceful attitudes, each with crook in hand and posy at her breast, in rustic boddice and petticoat, her hair prettily dressed with ribbons ; and forming together a group of the most charming Chloes and Delias ever imagined.

Near them, either reclining on the turf or leaning against the trees, were the forms of the Duke of Wharton, Philip Dormer, Anthony Lowther, Colonel Argyle, and the other select gentlemen, who were thought worthy of appearing as shepherds for that day. They were very gaily dressed after the most becoming patterns to be found in Sèvres china, with the exception of the Colonel, who chose to wear the plaid and dress of a Scottish shepherd ; and if he looked less becoming than his more shewy associates, it could not be doubted he looked a great deal more natural. Truth however compels us to add, that he appeared to disadvantage in the eyes of that fashionable rustic community, particularly after Handsome Hervey drawlingly asked if he had left his bagpipes, where he had left his breeches.

To make the picture as rural as possible, a few sheep were to be seen at a little distance nibbling the grass, and occasionally looking askance at the

masquerade going on so near them. It certainly made a very pretty tableau—nor could it well have been otherwise, seeing how many beautiful women and handsome men formed its principal objects. Nevertheless the scene bore about as much resemblance to pastoral life as could be expected from a courtly representation of it.

The shepherds and shepherdesses were conversing together in a kind of rustic phraseology they thought most in accordance with their new apparel. The Princess was remarking the admirable effect of the scene before her. “It was truly Arcadian; it was a thousand pities she had not got Watteau to paint it. She could not have imagined the thing could have been done so well. She was much obliged to every body for having taken such pains to please her. She thought Madam Lepel’s dress particularly becoming.”

“An excellent dress indeed, your Royal Highness,” exclaimed the Duke of Devonshire, “it appears as if copied from the portrait of my Lady Dorothy, second cousin to my Lord Scrub, who chose to be drawn by Lely as a shepherdess holding an orange. Lady Dorothy married the Lord Barnaby Bullrush. He had the reputation of being a mighty strange person, and a vast deal of

mystery was attached to his name on account of some affair of gallantry he was stated to have had with a lady of condition, whom her friends said he used very scurvily. Lady Dorothy, your Royal Highness, was vastly pretty, and reports were busy with her name in connection with a certain nobleman of high rank who had acquired no slight celebrity for his devotion to the fair sex. He married late in life, and had a son ; and it was remarked as a singular coincidence that the boy should have terrible red hair, and my Lord's cousin, who was a frequent visitor, had hair of that identical colour."

"Don't you think, my Lord, Mary Lepel looks vastly well as a shepherdess ?" asked the Princess turning suddenly round to the arbiter of fashion.

"Vastly well indeed !" drawled Handsome Hervey. Her Royal Highness gazed intently at the beau and then as intently at her Maid of Honour ; perhaps she expected the gentleman to have expressed his opinion more at length ; but Handsome Hervey was an economist of his words. Possibly she thought as the old woman said of her owl, for exhibiting a similar deficiency of speech, "he thinks the more." Certain it is, it seemed that he regarded the proceedings of the Court favourite with more interest than he could readily find words to express.

Finding nothing was to be gained from the Exquisite, the Princess quietly resigned herself to the gossip of the Duke of Devonshire.

At a little distance stood another group composed of Mrs. Howard, the Duchess of Bolton, and Lady Wortley Montagu, engaged in observing the Maids of Honour.

"Maybe it isn't vexed I am," observed the Duchess, "at seeing that harem scarem creature, Sophy Howe, going so aisily into the trap that's set before her very eyes by that double distilled desaver Nanty Lowther. See how the sarpent eyes of him are fixed upon her; and she flutters about as giddily as though she had no more notion of danger than a post."

"Well, it's all her own fault," exclaimed Lady Wortley Montagu impatiently.

"She certainly has become prodigious careless," said Mrs. Howard; "but I don't think there's any harm in her."

"No more harm, my dear, than there is in a goose that the thafe of a fox is about to spring upon. It's a thousand pities though, so it is, the poor child's eyes are not opened to that wheedling fellow. She can't know what victims have already suffered by listening to his beguiling tongue—the villain of the world as he is."

"She wouldn't thank any one for telling her," replied Lady Mary. "But 'tis her affair, not ours. I dare say after all she knows well enough what she is about."

"Madam Howe is not ill disposed," said Mrs. Howard. "Her good spirits run away with her."

"By the powers! now, I'm thinking it's bad spirits as will run away with her at last," observed the Duchess, in her broadest Irish, and with a laugh in which both her companions readily joined. "But look at the Colonel, dear," added she, "it's trying he is to say something civil to poor Fanny Meadows, without observing how monstrous shocked she looks at finding his knees uncovered in that Scotch fashion he's in. Oh, bother, now! it isn't modest she is, at all, at all! I'll go bail she'd faint if she was sure it wouldn't be thought indelicate in the presence of so many gentlemen."

"Oh, she's quite insufferable!" cried Lady Mary. "In my opinion there's nothing so detestable as a prude."

"Ah, then, faith!" replied the Duchess, with a deal of mischief in her fine eyes, "it's asy enough you ought to be on that score; for divil a reproach of the sort was ever made against you or is like to be, honey."

“No,” said Mrs. Howard, good humouredly joining in the laugh, “Lady Mary and I ought to have no fears of being pointed at as prudes. I suppose the character did not suit our dispositions.”

“I don’t know what it suited,” replied Lady Mary. “But I know I never had a fancy that way. I always liked a pretty fellow, and never was ashamed to own it.”

“Oh, you’re honesty itself, my darling,” exclaimed her Grace, with a laugh. “But may be all this time you wasn’t content with liking but *one* pretty fellow.”

“Why, you see,” said Lady Mary, “they’re a kind of dish that are mightily like larks—you require a prodigious number to make anything of a show.”

“Oh, that’s it, is it?” cried the Duchess. “Well, you’ve done your best anyhow to have as good a show of ’em as your neighbours. But what’s Madam Bellenden doing with all those iligant shrugs and grimaces? Is it wanting to pass for a French Shepherdess she is?”

“She’s only practising her Parisian accomplishments,” said Mrs. Howard. “She thinks, I suppose, she may forget them if they are not employed; and I verily believe were she left to the

companionship of the poultry-yard, she would call them into service for the purpose of captivating the genteelest of the cocks and ganders, rather than dispense with them entirely."

"Only look now at our dear Molly Lepel!" cried the Duchess of Bolton. "There is the wild and worthless Duke of Wharton on one side of her, and the elegant and ceremonious Philip Dormer on the other. Faith, she looks like a lamb between a tiger and a fox."

"At least she appears quite reconciled to such dangerous company," said Lady Mary, in a tone much resembling a sneer.

"Bless us, they're going to sing," exclaimed Mrs. Howard; and sure enough, on a command from the Princess, a music book was produced. The Duke of Wharton, Colonel Argyle, Mary Lepel, and Mary Bellenden sang out of it the following words; Philip Dormer accompanying them on the flute:

QUEEN OF THE MAY.

Bring wreaths of pale roses, meed worthy a bride,
And ev'ry fair blossom that bends to the blast;
Sweet violets bring from the banks where they hide,
And the sun-loving cowslips pluck freely and fast.

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For the Best—for the Fairest, a garland we weave,
She shall reign o'er our sports, and our homage receive,
'Tis the season of Spring, when young hearts should be gay,
And we form a rich crown for our Queen of the May.

Come join in the dance as we scatter fresh flow'rs,
And loyal as joyous, cry "Hail to our Queen!"
May her life be one season of these happy hours,
And her heart as the sun-shine that gladdens this scene.
Then away with all sorrow, we'll dream not of care
While the sun is so bright, and the world is so fair;
'Tis the season of Spring—we should dance and be gay,
As we sing in sweet chorus, "Hail, Queen of the May!"

The Princess thanked the singers for the compliment they had paid her, naming each by a pastoral designation it had been agreed before hand they were to wear with their Arcadian dresses. Then a dance was called for; and the Brigadier's daughter and Handsome Hervey were commanded to tread a measure. To make things as characteristic as possible, Philip Dormer had provided himself with a pipe and tabor, and a pretty rustic dance was now danced to that very rustic accompaniment.

The beau was quite as great a beau as a shepherd as he was as a Gentleman of the Bed-chamber; in the elegance of his appearance and in the

refinement of his manners he looked worthy of being chosen as the umpire of the pretensions of the three rival goddesses. But his air of high breeding and easy self-possession as he attended to his beautiful partner, did not pass unobserved by her. She thought over her long list of heroes, and endeavoured to find one with whom she could compare him ; but she was soon obliged to acknowledge it was a fruitless search. Not one had been so greatly indebted to the dancing master. Not one had possessed an appearance so effeminate. As to her favourite Prince Oroondates, any comparison was out of the question.

The Maid of Honour addressed her partner once or twice, but found she could elicit from him nothing but civil replies expressed in the fewest words, and drawled out in a way that made it appear fatiguing to speak. At the conclusion of the dance he led her before the Princess, who praised their performance, and made an expressive allusion to their being extremely well matched. The gentleman elevated his eyebrows a little, but did not tax his powers of endurance by any utterance of his sentiments. The lady laughed as gaily as innocence and happiness would allow, and denied the similitude very archly, stating that she was much

inclined to think her partner belonged to the dumb part of creation, so little use did he make of his gift of speech.

“Ah, Delia !” exclaimed the Princess, “is not that a proof, think you, of an impression made upon our esteemed Strephon too deep to be expressed by ordinary language ?”

“To be sure it is, honey !” exclaimed the Duchess of Bolton. “It’s extraordinary language he’ll be afther using when he begins to find out what’s the matter with him. I’ll go bail he’ll want a hundred tongues to express the half of it.”

“Oh dear me !” cried the beau in his peculiar tone, “one tongue would more than suffice were that tongue your Grace’s.”

“Oh the villain ! what a reflection,” cried the Duchess joining in the general laugh, as Handsome Hervey making her a low bow, handed his fair partner to her seat where, however, much to her surprise, he chose to linger. While another couple were dancing, she entered into a lively discussion on her favourite subject, and shewed such extensive reading in fashionable romances, as astonished her companion. She launched out into the praises of the different heroes, recounting their great

deeds with a most delightful enthusiasm ; and finally declaring that she could never be satisfied with a lover unless he rivalled the achievements of that incomparable Prince whose name was so frequently on her lips.

The Duke of Wharton endeavoured to ridicule these heroic predilections, referring to the heroes of romance as so many crack-brained fools ; but it would have been better for him if he had left the subject alone. The fair enthusiast addressed herself to the beau, and described to him some of the numerous incidents with which her memory was stored, exemplifying the most devoted and disinterested attachment on the part of such illustrious characters. Handsome Hervey appeared to give his whole attention to every word he heard, though his comments were, as was customary with him, particularly scanty.

Each shepherd danced a measure with his shepherdess, and the pipe and tabor player was kept in pretty active employment providing music for them. At last Colonel Argyle good naturedly offered to relieve him, and Philip Dormer had the gratification of leading out Mrs. Howard, she being the only shepherdess who had not enjoyed this portion of the day's entertainments. He had

little reason to regret having delayed this enjoyment, for he quickly found he had obtained an admirable partner. Mrs. Howard was a truly fascinating woman, and having put forth all her powers to please, was rewarded with the most perfect success.

The dancing being over, another Arcadian entertainment was commenced. The Princess had heard of the contests of rural swains in singing the praises of their mistresses, and wished to have something as like them as possible. It had therefore been determined that each shepherd should recite a poem of his own in honour of his particular mistress; and when the Princess commanded the appearance of the rival poets, they took their places opposite to her, and every one in turn repeated some high flown verses respecting some real or imaginary object of his affections.

The affair was exceedingly well managed. The competitors had no doubt an understanding amongst themselves previously, and most of them being in possession of considerable poetic talent, their verses afforded the most lively satisfaction amongst their fair auditors, each of whom found herself alluded to under her appropriate rustic

appellation. This trial of skill gave rise to the expression of many happy fancies, and Delia, Daphne, Clora and Lavinia, our young Maids of Honour, became the objects of some of the most graceful flatteries that could delight a pretty woman.

The Princess had to pronounce judgment on the claims of the competitors. As all had acquitted themselves extremely well it required a nice discrimination to name the most successful. Her Royal Highness, however, did not lose much time in coming to a decision. She determined that the shepherd Strephon had most distinguished himself in the contest, and in token of her decision in his favour placed a wreath of myrtle round his head.

Handsome Hervey, to every one's surprise, had taken his place amongst the contending poets. No one suspected he would have fatigued himself by writing or learning a couplet. The beau, however, astonished them by repeating several well turned complimentary verses, which must have given him no slight trouble to compose. They were in praise of some mistress designated by the fanciful title of Mellabia, but who she was, the very cleverest at guessing had not

the most remote conception, as he had never been seen to pay particular attention to any woman.

While the victor was being rallied at the success he had achieved in immortalising an unknown mistress, the attention of Mary Lepel was called by her royal mistress to the fact that she had allowed her sheep to stray out of sight. She was commanded to take up her crook and bring them back. The Maid of Honour hastily rose from the spot where she had been reclining between Mrs. Howard and the Duchess of Bolton, and tripped lightly after her strayed flock. The Duke of Wharton, Philip Dormer, and Colonel Argyle, simultaneously made a movement to assist her in her search; but she playfully forbade their stirring, assuring them that she intended showing every one how well she could perform her duties as a shepherdess—a character she appeared to like almost as well as that of a heroine. She went laughingly away, evidently as full of happiness as of beauty, and her melodious voice could be heard singing the burthen of a pastoral ballad for some time after she had disappeared from her admiring companions.

After leaving the lawn, Mary Lepel found her-

self in a path winding through various plots and little clumps of shrubs. She went tripping on till she came to an open gate. Satisfied that the sheep had taken advantage of its being unfastened, the fair young shepherdess did not hesitate a moment about following in the same direction. She was now in what appeared to be a shady lane, along which she proceeded in the same joyous spirit in which she had set out upon her search, amusing herself by conjecturing whether any of her fair favourites had ever been sent by a Princess to bring back strayed sheep, and then imagining the adventures they met with.

She was surprised at last that she could see no trace of her flock ; and having gone a considerable distance, was considering the propriety of turning back, when she heard voices close to her, and immediately afterwards a whistle was given. Several men then leaped from the hedge ; at the same moment that a chariot drove rapidly up, two men dressed like countrymen, in smock frocks, seized her arms, whilst another in the garb of a farmer appeared to be giving them directions.

“ Come, Madam,” cried one of them in accents unmarked by the slightest rusticity, “ may I never do an ill turn if I’m not cut to the heart to

be obliged to do anything to so fair a lady that may appear ungenteel ! curse me if I a'nt—but time's precious, and we can't waste it in ceremony. I must beg therefore you will allow me the honour of conducting you to the chariot, assuring you that no harm can befall you ; on the contrary, that it will be greatly to your interest to go with us quietly."

"Insolent fellow ! how dare you have the audacity—"

"Oh, if that's the go, may I never do an ill-turn but with your leave, my pretty dove, we must e'en cage you our own way. Come Bill, lend a hand."

Mary Lepel screamed as the two men attempted to lift her. In a moment afterwards, several others jumped from another part of the hedge. They, however, it seemed, did not belong to the same party ; for, on their appearance, the countryman and his associates who had first seized the Brigadier's daughter, lifted up their smock frocks, and each man drew his sword, proving they had very little to do with the rustic occupations their garb denoted. A second chariot approached with the new comers. These also carried the arms of gentlemen under their outward garment, for, on no-

ticing the hostile proceedings of the other party, they armed themselves in a similar manner.

“Come, Captain!” cried out the leader of the second party as he came up, “you must give up the lady. We are the stronger party, and are determined to have her.”

“No, Jack, may I never do an ill turn if I throw away a hundred pounds quite so easily,” replied the leader of the other band, “curse me if I do.”

“Well then, boys, there is nothing for it but to fight for her,” exclaimed Jack, turning to his friends. “I’ve sworn to take her; so my Cock-and-Bottle Captain, look to yourself, for I’ll make you die like a gentleman, though you never could live like one.”

The men who had hold of Mary Lepel were obliged to release her to defend themselves from the sharp onset of their assailants. Bewildered and terrified by the clashing of the steel and the fierce oaths of the men who surrounded her, the Maid of Honour stood for some minutes irresolute. She would have ran away, but she found herself the centre of half a dozen fierce conflicts, and the quick glancing weapons threatened danger on every side.

Presently she found herself seized upon by one of the fellows who last arrived. He snatched her up in his arms, and was bearing her with hasty strides towards the second chariot, his companions closing in between him and his pursuers in such a manner as to prevent their molesting him. The Brigadier's daughter screamed lustily, and struggled as much as she was able, but could make only a very trifling resistance in the powerful grasp that enfolded her light limbs.

She was borne to the chariot—the door was hastily thrown open, she was rapidly placed inside, and in another moment this daring attempt at abduction would have been successful. The screams however of the young lady had been incessant, and loud enough to excite the attention of several persons who happened to be in the neighbourhood. A crowd rushed to the spot, several soldiers on duty at the palace amongst the number.

“I'll be hanged if that isn't our young Madam!” shouted an elderly man in the Lepel livery, as he hastily approached the scene of action with a long staff in his hand. In the next moment the fellow who had placed Mary Lepel in the chariot was stretched on the ground; a general attack was

made on the combatants, who were glad to beat a hasty retreat; and John Coachman was made happy for life by his young mistress leaping into his arms as the chariot drove off at a furious rate.

CHAPTER III.

FOLLY ON THE THAMES.

To lead a life of drink and feast
T'oppress the poor, and cheat the priest,
Or triumph in a virgin lost,
Is all the manhood thou canst boast.

SMART.

TOWARDS the afternoon of the day following that of the occurrence described in the last chapter, several persons had assembled in what appeared to be a public coffee-room. The room which was large, though low for its size, had boxes all round, where small parties could be accommodated with the infusion of the aromatic berry, then so popular, and a perusal of the newspaper; and round the little tables they contained several little groups had already assembled. Sometimes

a solitary individual spelt over his paper by himself; sometimes two persons were engaged in confidential communication, for the coffee-house was a favourite place of meeting, not only for pleasure but for business; and sometimes the news would be read by a little circle of eager politicians, who listened only to make their comments on the state of affairs, the fall in South Sea Stock, and the scandal of the hour.

Although the place was undoubtedly a coffee-room, it bore evidence of being one differing in many features from such as were then in existence in different parts of the town. The low ceiling, the windows all round, the continual change in the level of the floor, were features not to be found in any place of entertainment of the same kind either in London or Westminster. Then, the windows being open, instead of hearing the London cries, the rattle of the carriages, or the steady tread of the chairmen, or any of the various noises which were always to be found within earshot, the sounds that were most audible resembled the beating of waves against a ship; and the more to encourage this idea, every now and then there came a shout of "Boat ahoy!" "Oars!" and many others familiar to all such persons as were in any

way acquainted with the navigation of the Thames.

On going to the window this impression was confirmed by noticing the broad surface of the river, with its numerous boats and barges passing and repassing, with the wharves on each side; from that place of observation the stranger might see occasionally a boat shoot towards the spot where he stood, and such passengers as she carried, shortly afterwards were observed to enter the coffee-room. The external view might occasion some doubts to enter the mind of the stranger as to the exact character of the place in which he found himself; but a glance around him at the eager politicians, the busy gossips, the active waiters, and the fragrant beverage, of which fresh supplies continually made their appearance, must soon have satisfied him, notwithstanding the extraordinary locality, that the place was a genuine coffee-house.

It was well known as "The Folly," a floating coffee-house on the Thames, in some respects similar to the floating baths in our days, so long a familiar feature near the bridges. "The Folly" was much patronized by men of fashion, and of course by men of no fashion. To get into a wherry, and be rowed to this favourite resort, to

pay the usual penny at the bar, look over the papers, take a *dish* of coffee, and hear the gossip, political, literary and fashionable, that was sure to be circulated there, formed a part of the daily routine of a man of quality.

“The Folly” also was a favourite place for assignations both for business and pleasure. Although the coffee-house had many frequenters, in one of those snug boxes people could be as secret as they pleased; and, what was equally important, quite out of the way of interruption from those whose visits they most feared.

Although many persons were engaged in reading the newspapers, there was a continual humming of voices going on in the coffee-room, which served effectually to screen the communications of the confidential. This appeared to be taken advantage of by two persons in a distant corner of the room, who had been leaning over their little table, and carrying on an animated conversation that had lasted some time. One of these men had a green shade over his eyes, and was closely wrapped up in a heavy coachman’s coat; the other was in a shabby genteel dress of the period, a sort of compromise between the gentleman and the footpad. His features were plain

enough to be seen, and readily enough to be recognized. They bore the impudent swaggering look of the fellow so well known to the town as Captain Spatterdash, or Jemmy Highflyer, among his familiars—the Cock and Bottle captain already introduced to the reader at the meeting of the Hell Fire Club, and at the attempted abduction of the Brigadier's daughter : the young lady just named appeared to be the subject of conversation between these worthies.

“ Hang me, if I could have suspected that jade Fortune would have played me so slippery a trick !” he exclaimed. “ There never was a better plot laid ; and we had watched day after day for an opportunity to put it into execution. May I never do an ill turn, if I wasn't on the very point of succeeding, when I was stopped, as the d—l would have it by that cheating shark, Jack Wild-air. Who'd have thought of his being there ? Curse me, if I did ! May I never do an ill turn if I didn't believe he was safe and sound in his old lodgings at the sponging-house.”

“ It was a most vexatious business,” observed the other in a low voice.

“ Vexatious,” uttered the Captain. “ May I never do an ill turn if it wasn't the most cursed

disappointment I ever heard of. To lose a hundred golden guineas when they were just within one's grasp, was enough to aggravate a thousand Jobs. Howsomever, it was well I managed to get off as I did ; for if I hadn't beat my retreat at once, I should have been close enough within the Stone-jug by this time."

"And you are quite sure he is employed by the Duke of Somerset in this affair?" demanded his companion.

"Got it all out of one of the bungling rascals as interrupted me that blessed morning. May I never do an ill turn, if I don't pay Jack off all old scores some of these days. Couldn't have supposed he'd have sought to take the bread out of the mouth of such an old friend as I am. But I heard the Duke was most determined to succeed; and his recent failure has served only to aggravate him to make more strenuous exertions. He'll raise heaven and earth to get possession of the lady; and Jack Wildair is just the very fellow to help him. May I never do an ill turn, but I think we shall be a day after the fair, unless we employ decisive measures, and set about them at once."

"I'll stimulate you the more, Captain Spatter-

dash. I here offer fifty pounds above what I had previously mentioned, if you succeed in placing this young lady in my possession."

"Bullfrog told me the Duke had offered a clear two hundred!" said the Captain, drily. "And since I've seen what a bang-up angel she is, may I never do an ill turn if I don't think she's worth that to anybody."

"We won't quarrel about terms, Captain. Get me Madam Lepel, and I'll amply recompense you."

"Say no more. You shall have her, depend on't. If that fellow crosses my path, I'll so cut and carve him, he shall only be fit for the sausage-makers; may I never do an ill turn if I don't. But I think we'd better go to work at once; so let's be off out of this."

The two persons immediately rose, and made their way out of the coffee-room; but not without exciting observation from some of the company. There was a group near the door who had been engaged in an animated discussion, and were obliged to make way for the Captain and his companion. The former strutted along very consequentially, and with an easy impudence recognized several persons who were however quite

as well known to every one else in the room as to himself, comprising as they did some of the most celebrated writers of the day.

“Ah, Mr. Dean, your humble servant!” exclaimed the Captain as he passed along. “Sir John Vanbrugh, your most obedient. Mr. Pope, I hope I see you well. Sir Richard Steele, I kiss your hand. Mr. De Foe, may I never do an ill turn if I am not monstrously delighted at beholding you again.” And thus he went through the whole party. They, however, returned his friendly salutations very coldly; and Dean Swift replied by asking the Captain how he left his friends in Newgate—a question that worthy officer appeared not to have heard, nor the general titter that followed it, as he went on bowing and addressing every one till he reached the door. His companion, on the contrary, seemed desirous of avoiding notice, and hurriedly passed through the group without uttering a word.

“That scoundrel’s after no good!” exclaimed the Dean; “and from his civility one might be pretty sure he entertains some design on our purses; only I happen to be more sure, by a great deal, he is much too shrewd a rogue to be engaged in any affair so little likely to turn out to his advantage.”

A laugh recompensed the Dean for his jert.

“Does any one know the person who was in his company?” inquired Pope. “If anything could be judged of a fellow by his associates, I will venture to say he may be accounted a rogue on indisputable evidence.”

“I may be mistaken,” said Sir John Vanbrugh; “but the walk resembled very closely that of the Duke of Buckingham.”

“Oh then there’s no great penetration required in guessing the employment of our civil friend,” observed Sir Richard Steele.

“There’s some intrigue in hand, I’ll wager a guinea,” said Sir John.

“Was’nt Spatterdash one of the parties engaged in the attempted abduction at Hampton Court?” asked Pope.

“So I heard his name mentioned,” replied De Foe. “He is an experienced hand at poaching for petticoats, and likely to be extremely useful to any one who might require his services in that way.”

“And Buckingham is just the employer for such a scoundrel,” added Pope. “I should not wonder at all if my fair friend Molly Lepel is the game they have in view. I saw her yesterday

at Sir Godfrey Kneller's, where she was sitting for her portrait; and as I glanced at her I could not help envying the knight his agreeable study of her features."

"Yes, the man is certainly to be envied who possesses such a woman's *countenance*," said Dean Swift; "and so I suppose thinks the Duke, who wishes no doubt to purchase it as the quickest mode of possession."

"She may countenance the painter as every pretty woman does her mirror—for the agreeable image it produces," said De Foe; "but his Grace will find himself in a very different position should he seek to make himself master of her attractions."

"At least, she shall be warned," observed Pope; "the days of Charles II. are passed, thank God."

"Ah! we have much to thank God for!" cried the Dean. "If the merry monarch had much profligacy he also possessed some taste: the change appears to be to greater profligacy, and no taste."

Other subjects were soon started both political and literary, and the coffee-room of "the Folly" resounded with the smart sayings and brilliant

remarks of the gay throng, much to the amusement of some and the annoyance of others. Some were too busy spelling over the contents of their papers not to feel annoyed at the amusement going on around them; and they took care to betray their feelings by sundry audible pishes, pshaws, and frowning glances, they thought proper to direct towards the merry group.

Amongst the discontented, the most conspicuous was a young citizen, a recently appointed ensign in the Train Bands, who, considering himself a great man, seemed desirous of showing all the insolence and independence which he chose to imagine it was the great man's privilege to exhibit. At first he satisfied himself with a mere "pshaw!" or "pish!" like others; but finding no notice taken of these evidences of his dissatisfaction, he expressed a few more emphatic expletives. Now Ensign Snap had long strove in his own circle to be regarded as a lion whose path it was extremely dangerous to cross, and the young cits of his acquaintance, some of whom had accompanied him to "the Folly," looked upon him as one whom it was by no means advisable to offend. A growl from the lion in the Train Bands was always a sufficient hint for the more peaceably

disposed. Somewhat to their surprise, his companions found these intimations now produce no effect upon any one of the party it was expected they would intimidate ; except that one who bore the appearance of a clergyman, did once glance towards the spot where Ensign Snap was displaying his indignation, and asked loud enough to be heard by all in the coffee-room, “if anybody’s monkey had been taken ill.”

Just at this period, when the wrath of the Ensign was about to boil over, a man in a shabby campaign coat and dirty boots entered the room unperceived, and was stopped by a torrent of oaths and fierce expressions that issued from the officer in the Train Bands, who looked ready to devour the whole company, so fierce was his rage.

“I’ll not take an insult from any man, d—me!” exclaimed the Ensign. “His cloth protects him, or by G— I’d pull his nose.”

The party continued their laughing and jesting amongst themselves without taking the slightest notice of Ensign Snap, which greatly aggravated his rage. He seemed very desirous of fastening a quarrel upon some one ; but was rather at a loss which of the group to commence with. Every

now and then as he gave utterance to something particularly threatening he would half draw his sword, and dash it down in the scabbard again with great force.

“I’ll wager a guinea these fellows could be made to laugh on the other side of their mouths now,” said the Ensign, looking as big as he could ; “every fool could make as great a noise and fancy himself as d—d pleasant. I shouldn’t wonder at all but that they are all a parcel of poor devils practising to earn a sixpence at a grinning match. As for Master Parson, I suppose he’s lately had a crown given him, and has come to London to spend it.”

“Was that the one who called you a monkey, Captain?” mischievously inquired one of his associates.

“Monkey !” cried the Ensign half drawing his sword, “I should like to hear any man, not a rascally parson, use such a word to me. I’d let daylight into him, d— me.” Here the little officer of the Train Bands dashed his weapon into the scabbard with a clang that resounded throughout the room.

“Monkey !” shouted the man in the dirty boots as he stalked up to him ; and folding his

arms, brought his face as near as possible to that of the furious Ensign.

“Perdition seize me! what d’ye mean, fellow?” exclaimed Ensign Snap, taking a pace back, and eyeing the thin figure and cadaverous features of the stranger—which by the way, did not promise a very formidable opponent.

“Monkey!” shouted dirty boots again, taking another step forward, that brought him upon the Ensign’s toes.

“Thunder and devils! You impudent vagabond, how dare you behave in this way?” cried the little officer shaking with passion, as he once more stepped back.

“Monkey!” shouted the stranger, as he brought his face so close to that of the little Ensign that their noses touched.

Ensign Snap was almost in a state of convulsions. The company appeared to enjoy the scene amazingly; and even some of his associates, over whom he had so often domineered, began to exchange significant glances. The thin man still stood over him with folded arms, staring at him with a mingled expression of disdain and contempt. Ensign Snap felt that his character as a lion was likely to leave him, if he did not imme-

diately punish his insulter ; nay, he doubted whether his reputation in the Train Bands would not be gone for ever if he put up with such insolence : nevertheless, there was something in the glance of the thin man which made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

“ Waiter ! ” he exclaimed at last ; “ how came this pickpocket here ? ”

Ensign Snap speedily found he had asked a most imprudent question. In a moment the stranger had unfolded his arms ; in a moment the Ensign was lifted off the ground, and to his own horror, the surprise of some, and the alarm of others, in another moment he found himself thrown through the open window by which he had stood, smashing part of it in his exit, and cast into the Thames, into which he presently was heard to fall with a tremendous splash.

A rush was made to the windows by the company, as the horrified waiters, landlady, and all the establishment, crowded into the coffee-room. The gentleman in the shabby campaign coat and dirty boots very coolly sat himself down, and took up a newspaper, as he began to hum an opera tune. He did not give so much as a glance towards the window to learn the fate of the

unfortunate Ensign ; nor did he look at the group of terrified people who stood before him, as much amazed at his coolness, as they were horrified by the deed.

The landlady was the first to speak.

“ Here’s a pretty kettle of fish !” said she ; and then thinking her own loss the first thing to be considered, added fiercely, “ I hopes you’ll pay for them broken winders.”

“ Make out your bill, my good woman,” said the thin man, very quietly. “ To so many broken panes of glass ; so much. I’ll pay it.”

“ That’s acting like a gemman, howsomever !” said the woman much mollified. “ But what’s to be done in regard of the poor gentleman what’s drowneded ?”

“ Make out your bill, my good woman,” added the man in the same quiet tone, and without in the slightest degree altering the unconcerned expression of his countenance. “ To one Ensign of Train Bands sent to the bottom of the Thames ; so much. I’ll pay it.”

This was too much for the risible muscles of his questioner.

“ Well, you *are* a rum customer, I must say,” exclaimed the landlady of ‘ The Folly.’ “ And may I make so free as to ax your name ?”

“S’death, my good woman, don’t you know *me*?—I’m Lord Peterborough.”

“It’s all right,” cried a customer from one of the windows. “A waterman has just dragged him into his boat. He’s only got a good ducking.”

“Sarved him right too!” loudly exclaimed the landlady, repeating a profound curtsy to her noble customer. The eccentric Earl was now recognised by many of his friends; and they enjoyed a hearty laugh together at the summary punishment they had seen inflicted on the turbulent Ensign, as the citizens mischievously hurried off to offer him their consolations and assistance—which he seemed to relish as little as his bath.

CHAPTER IV.

A DAY WITH THE KING'S BUCKHOUNDS.

The horn sonorous calls, the pack awaked,
Their matins chant, nor brook thy long delay.
My courser hears their voice ; see there with ears
And tail erect, neighing, he paws the ground ;
Fierce rapture kindles in his reddening eyes,
And boils in ev'ry vein.

SOMERVILLE.

THERE was a fine bracing air, for it was the close of autumn. The brown leaves had fallen from the trees, and were either whirling in eddies, or driving in clouds over the open spaces. Of the dense masses of foliage that had given shelter to such countless varieties of birds, and had afforded shade from the fierce sun to many a weary traveller, nothing remained but a few

shrivelled leaves still clinging to the boughs, bearing scarce any resemblance to the fresh verdure which had so lately distinguished them.

The sky was clear : one vast expanse of blue spread out over the wide horizon, and the sun was visible, though his rays were scarcely felt. Instead of the subduing heat which had been often hardly endurable, the sunshine was one that afforded far more light than warmth. The grass was slightly touched with hoar frost of the preceding night : evidence of which, however, was fast disappearing, as the sunbeams came forth with increased power.

In short it was a delightful healthy morning, particularly for out-of-door amusements. And so it had appeared to a multitude of people, for they had crowded together in a convenient place near Hampton Court for the purpose of getting a good view of the cavalcade from the palace, as the Court rode out to hunt. For it should be known to the reader that the Prince of Wales had exhibited a striking partiality for the sports of the field, and as the hunting season had just commenced, he insisted on the gentlemen of his suite and the principal ladies in attendance on his consort, joining him in full hunting costume, and enjoying the pleasures of the chase.

The people of England greatly approved of this taste in the son of their sovereign, and he had risen very much in their estimation in consequence of his apparent fondness for one of their national sports. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood took care to see as much of the hunt as was possible; and if they did not succeed in observing the whole of the chase, they never failed in gaining a sight of the Prince and his gallant company, whom they were sure to welcome with every demonstration of good will.

On the occasion to which we have just referred, there was a considerable crowd of rural labourers, servants, small shopkeepers, and a few persons of a more respectable grade, waiting the appearance of the Prince and his suite. To amuse themselves during the period they had to wait, there was the customary expenditure of jokes, with such tricks, as are most in request in such an assembly.

Among the company who appeared most amused was our old acquaintance John Coachman, who had taken up a position that afforded him a commanding view of the road by which the Royal Hunt were expected; and he had come to make his remarks on the horsemanship of people

of quality ; but more particularly to notice the equestrian appearance of his young mistress, in whose fame as a rider he felt more than ordinary interest. He was expatiating to a stranger, in the dress of a citizen, who seemed to take unusual pleasure in the old man's discourse.

John had been mentioning his never-to-be-forgotten experience in the Great Duke's stables, and had, on sufficient encouragement, proceeded to relate what he knew of the King's mistress ;— his round, good-humoured face glowing under his wig and cocked hat, in a way that showed the indignation he felt at having experienced such a degradation as, he not unjustly considered, existed in her service.

It was not unnatural for so communicative a person to allude to his present place ; and having got on such ground, to speak of " young Madam Lepel," seemed a matter of course. The stranger evidently took no common interest in his humble acquaintance, and asked many questions respecting the habits of the family, and the disposition of the Brigadier's daughter ; all of which John Coachman answered without the slightest hesitation.

" Bless your heart !" he exclaimed " I was the

first as ever set her on a oss. In short, I put her into training as soon as she come from boardin' school; and though at first she was uncommon skittish, and shied at everything, I managed, by taking monstrous pains with her, to break her in as reg'lar as possible; so that at last she went the pace in grand style, and might be warranted to keep up with any hounds as ever run."

"May I never do an ill turn but Madam Lepel must have been a most accomplished horse-woman," replied the stranger, who, it is scarcely necessary to add, was Captain Spatterdash; but he looked so like a respectable citizen in his sober suit, his own mother would not have known him. He had not fixed himself upon the honest coachman without an object, and there could be no doubt it was connected with his odious employment.

A loud huzza prepared them for the approach of the cavalcade; and now the Prince was seen, not in his usual plain coat, but in a hunting suit, with a bugle at his side, and a heavy whip in one hand. He took off his hat to the applause of the people, and bowed, if not gracefully, at least kindly; but his awkwardness was far less apparent on horseback than on foot. He seemed pleased with

his reception, and under the influence of his gratification, the homeliness of his features was not so conspicuous as was apparent in a drawing room.

He was followed by a brilliant train in which the Master of the King's buckhounds, and various officers connected with the Royal Hunting establishment, as well as equerries, grooms, lords and gentlemen, and other attendants on the Prince, were in full hunting costume of that period, on horses of various degrees of merit, but bearing but a remote resemblance to the splendid animals now brought together at a Royal Hunt.

The persons of many of these noblemen and gentlemen were known, and they were loudly cheered as they passed; but the crowd seemed most pleased by the appearance made by two or three lady equestrians, who rode near the Prince. These were the Maids of Honour who had been persuaded by their royal mistress to accompany her Consort in what would, at this day, be styled the first meet of the season.

"That's her!" exclaimed John Coachman, apparently in an ecstasy of gratification, pointing to one of the ladies. "Bless your heart, I could swear to her among a thousand. There's a seat!

there's a bridle hand ! there's a figure for a side saddle ! I've seen a little in my time, but amongst it all, nothing as could come up to our young Madam in her horsemanship !”

The enthusiastic charioteer directed the attention of his companion to a beautiful young amazon in a riding habit of blue camlet, embroidered with silver, wearing her well-powdered hair in curls that hung to her shoulder, though tied up by a scarlet ribbon, above which rose a beaver of the smartest cock, edged with silver, and ornamented with a feather. She certainly sat her horse with a great deal of easy grace, and the reins were grasped by a delicate fringed glove, in a manner that shewed the lady was quite qualified to manage her somewhat mettlesome steed.

“So that is young Madam Lepel, is it ?” inquired Captain Spatterdash, with more admiration than he could find language to express. “May I never do an ill turn, if I don't take her to be as pretty a bit of flesh as I ever clapt eyes on. Hark ye, honest friend !” exclaimed the Captain, condescendingly to his new acquaintance, “this same young mistress of thine is truly a most ravishing creature. She is likely to take all hearts by storm. Indeed I have heard of a nobleman who is despe-

rately enamoured of her at this present moment, and would not mind making the fortune of any worthy fellow who would put him in the right way of obtaining her."

"Bless your heart, that's nothing to what I know!" cried John Coachman, with a knowing wink, "there's a good many more osses than that in the stable, I can tell you."

At this moment the Captain recognised some one in the crowd, and suddenly pushed forward in that direction. He had scarcely turned his back, when a man, whose general attire was that of a country clergyman, took up his position. With a grave and thoughtful air he presently asked John Coachman if he knew whom he had been conversing with; and on being answered in the negative, begged to caution him upon too hastily forming new acquaintances, particularly warning him to beware of the person who had just left his side, who was no other than the notorious Captain Spatterdash, and who, there existed good reasons for believing, was employed by a certain dissolute nobleman to decoy a young lady named Lepel into his custody.

Nothing could exceed the indignation felt by honest John on hearing this communication, ex-

cept his gratitude to the reverend gentleman who had so timely warned him ; as he shook his fist in the direction the Captain had taken, he was profuse in his acknowledgments to the worthy clergyman who had so kindly interfered to protect his young mistress. As the two walked on to see the hounds thrown off, a confidential conversation commenced, in which John Coachman took care to inform his clerical acquaintance of all he knew respecting his master's daughter. The stranger, who was no other than Jack Wildair, found no difficulty in eliciting from the unsuspecting domestic all the intelligence he required respecting the fair Maid of Honour's habits and employments ; he learned where she walked, at what hour she was abroad, who she visited, where she slept, and who were her favourite friends and dependants. In short, he acquired all the information he needed, and he took a friendly leave of his new acquaintance, that he might lose no time in availing himself of the means his active mind had devised for assisting his employer in his nefarious schemes.

In the mean time the Brigadier's daughter rode on by the side of her friend Mary Bellenden, the gayest of that gay throng who followed their Prince. She was mounted on a hunter, appa-

rently of great speed and power, who seemed extremely desirous of bursting away from the light hold of his rider, and dashing over huntsmen, hounds, Prince, courtiers, and all. He, however, satisfied himself with prancing, neighing, rearing, and playing a few other antics, not uncommon with high spirited horses, when displaying symptoms of having a will of their own.

The delicate hand of the rider gently patted his arched neck, and he heard the sweet tones of her voice commending his beauty. He was not insensible to such fascinations ; for though he did not cease his eccentric evolutions, they became less violent than they had at first been.

On her right rode the Duke of Wharton, on a beautiful grey, nearly sixteen hands high. He was, as usual, extremely attentive to the young Maid of Honour, and evinced, in every look and word, how completely his heart was devoted to her. Notwithstanding the impassioned tendency of his gaze, a smile rested upon his soft voluptuous countenance, that seemed to express a sense of triumph, as if the bright prize for which he had contended was now securely his own.

At a little distance rode Philip Dormer, who occasionally exchanged a word or two with the

Brigadier's daughter, notwithstanding the attempt made by the Duke to monopolize her attention. He felt he was but second in the race, but he was satisfied it was not yet half run, and that at the proper moment there could be no difficulty in the way of his putting on all his speed, passing his confident competitor, and winning. Consequently he was in full spirits, graceful as ever in his compliments, and apparently on the most friendly terms with himself and his rivals.

Mary Bellenden was full of vivacity, and coquetting with her admirers with all the effect her charms could gain from her equestrian habit. Colonel Argyle made one of the group; but his indifference seemed so perfect that it was scarcely possible to imagine he had ever been attached to the lady.

Sophy Howe was riding by the side of Anthony Lowther; no longer loud and laughing. Her eyes were cast down, her countenance flushed, and there was a deep seriousness in her attention to the whispered communication of her dangerous companion.

The Prince frequently turned round to address one or other of the ladies, and occasionally pointed out some place in the delightful landscape

before him, that excited his admiration. He was in excellent spirits, and did not fail to honour his fair companions with his usual profuse expenditure of compliments.

In this manner, the cavalcade proceeded till they entered upon an extensive track of grazing land, where on an eminence that commanded a splendid view of the surrounding country, they caught a glimpse of the hounds with their usual attendants, and a numerous field of horsemen composed principally of the neighbouring gentry, who as soon as the Prince was recognised took off their hats and welcomed him with three hearty cheers. His Royal Highness looked well pleased at this compliment, and bowed repeatedly as he advanced towards them.

The huntsmen and whippers in were actively employed in keeping back the fine pack of stag hounds that now enlivened the scene with their graceful forms and musical throats, and many of the riders had considerable difficulty in restraining the impatience of their high mettled steeds, who seemed extremely anxious to make a start. The animal rode by Mary Lepel, particularly, shewed unmistakeable signs of an inclination to break away; and when held in, he pawed up the turf,

and turned now on one side and now on the other, in a manner that attracted general attention to himself and to his lovely rider.

“Is your horse in lofe, Molly Lepel, that he play such dricks vid you?” inquired the Prince, good humouredly.

“It is by no means unnatural for your Royal Highness to suppose so,” observed Philip Dormer, “every one who approaches Madam Lepel cannot help being placed in such a predicament.”

“Ah, mein Gott!” exclaimed his Royal Highness, laughing with great earnestness, “it shall be von grand humiliation for der boor horse; for like oder beobles I know, he cannot vail to make an ass of himself.”

The Prince’s jest was received as Prince’s jests invariably are, and although the Duke of Wharton and Philip Dormer felt satisfied they were the subjects of it, they laughed quite as loudly as the rest; and this as good courtiers they were bound to do.

“Down, Jowler! back, Towzer! steady, Ponto! away, Hero!” came frequently from the royal attendants, as they sought to remind a careless hound of his duty.

The Brigadier's daughter felt inexpressibly delighted at the animated scene before her; it served to create a pleasing excitement, that made her feel as though about undertaking some great adventure.

"A penny for your thoughts, child!" suddenly cried Mary Bellenden, as they were riding together, noticing her young friend's pleased yet excited look. "*Ma foi*, if the Prince had accused yourself instead of your horse of being in love, I don't think he would have been very far from the truth. I'll wager now a pair of fringed gloves you are considering the rival claims of the Duke and Philip Dormer. Is it not so, *ma mignonne*?"

"No, Mary, I am not thinking of any thing of the kind, believe me."

"*Est-il possible, ma chère*, then what in the name of wonder can you be so intent on?"

"I was thinking whether Cyrus ever took Roxana to enjoy so moving a scene as this?"

"*Parbleu!* you are ever thinking of those abominable romances; you are as bad as you were when at Minerva House. But *voilà!* they have found a stag. Away he goes! there, you can just see him bounding over that low hedge. Now

he's in the turnip field. Oh, *mon Dieu!* this hunting is prodigiously exhilarating."

"Ware hounds, ware hounds!" shouted the huntsmen, as the noble pack were getting off on the scent, and the attendants rode round to keep back the crowd of horsemen pressing forward.

"Now, mine goot vriends!" exclaimed the Prince, "is you all ruined pody and preeches, dat you should be so imbatient to go to der dogs?"

A loud laugh, in which the Prince joined as heartily as any, shewed how readily the company appreciated his Royal Highness' pleasantry.

"Oh, this is charming, this is beautiful indeed!" cried Mary Lepel, with much enthusiasm, as she gazed on the excited scene before her; but the impatience and spirit of her steed almost immediately served to take up all her attention, for as he heard the cry of the hounds, the exclamations of the huntsmen, and became aware of the throng of horses pressing on around him, he began to pull at the rein and paw with his fore legs with increased violence. The fair equestrian soothed him both with hand and voice, but he let her know very intelligibly, he was not to be left behind.

"I hope der ladies is not afraid of noting," cried the Prince, "though so mosh inglined to preak our hearts, I no wish they shall preak dere own necks."

"Your Royal Highness need be under no apprehension," said the Duke of Wharton, after the laugh had subsided, "ladies' necks are not easily dislocated, or they would be unworthy of the heads they carry; and no one ever heard of such an accident happening to a Maid of Honour."

"Very goot; I did not tink of dat," replied the Prince, "but it has happen to some vemales, who have der misfortune to preak dere necks at Tyburn," and the Prince's laugh was heard above that of his obsequious courtiers.

His Royal Highness and his friends forgot when such an accident happened even to Maids of Honour and to more than one, in the time and under the auspices of one of his ancestors. On Henry VIII, the Pope conferred the title of "Defender of the Faith;" but His Majesty could have laid a much better claim, in consequence of his having been instrumental in bringing about these "accidents" in the persons of his own wives, to the Chinese distinction of *first chop*.

"We must pe off," added the Prince, "der

hounds are in vull cry ; now, mine goot vriends, every von for himself, and der teufel catch der hindmost."

Away swept the whole body of horsemen down the hill, and away went the Brigadier's daughter in the midst of them. The high spirited animal she rode did not at first seem inclined to go in the most straight direction ; for he swerved a little on one side and then on the other, and his arched neck was playfully bent, till his mane almost swept the ground. He went down the side of the hill at an easy pace, the Duke of Wharton on one side and Philip Dormer on the other ; the other Maids of Honour with their gentlemen close behind.

At the bottom of the hill the land opened to a considerable distance—a low hedge with a dry ditch enclosing the next field. Although an open gate was visible at a convenient distance, many of the horsemen chose to shew the leaping powers of their hunters, and the barrier being insignificant, they found no difficulty in passing it. The horse rode by Mary Lepel evidently intended to follow their example, and went over the obstruction almost without an effort. The Brigadier's daughter called to mind the lessons of John

Coachman, and the leap did not in the slightest degree inconvenience her. She was closely followed by her attendant gentlemen ; but her fair schoolfellows thought it most advisable to turn aside, and take advantage of the friendly gate. By this division Mary Lepel got rid of all her suite except the Duke and Philip Dormer, who kept near enough to encourage her by their commendations of her riding.

After passing the first mile, the animal she rode increased his pace. The field was beginning to get a little scattered. The hounds being far away in front closely waited on by some of the best mounted officers of the Royal Hunt, between whom and our fair heroine several horsemen might be seen, the Prince amongst them, going over the ground in gallant style, and taking everything before them in the most fearless spirit.

It not, however, unfrequently happened that amongst these adventurous riders a fall would occur; and a riderless horse scouring over the pastures or a gaily appparelled huntsman sticking in a ditch, now became no unusual feature in the landscape. As the chase proceeded the state of the country became more difficult. Stiff fences, high walls, broad ditches, rapid brooks, and double hedges became more and more frequent.

Mary Lepel very much enjoyed her ride. She kept her seat well; and of the leaps, though they were becoming more and more formidable, finding they put her to little inconvenience, she had become less apprehensive. The pace was now very strong, and her two companions found some difficulty in keeping near her. They had already passed a considerable portion of those who had a few minutes before made it appear that they were intent upon being well up with the hounds; and those who were in advance of them lessened in number every five minutes.

One by one they were passed or disappeared in some way or other as another mile was gone over. Miss Lepel overtook the Prince, who had dismounted, and was opening a five barred gate when her horse came on at full speed, and to the prodigious astonishment of his Royal Highness, the same moment he was aware of her approach, he beheld her kiss her hand as her steed made a prodigious leap, clearing gate, Prince, horse, and all.

“Mein Gott!” exclaimed he, as the Duke of Wharton, and Philip Dormer came up. “Our Molly Lepel flies drough the air like von old vitch on a proomstick.”

There was no time for further remark. His

Royal Highness mounted, and with the young Duke and Philip Dormer rode on after the flying equestrian, whom he made every exertion to overtake, but without success. They, however, shortly came in sight of her, going at a tremendous pace over an extensive range of pasture fields divided by "raspers" of the most threatening character, which he beheld her pass with a degree of astonishment he could not find words to express.

They managed to get over them, but not without difficulty ; and these prodigious leaps tried the mettle of their horses, on whom also it was evident the pace was beginning to tell. But in this manner the chase continued for several miles, the Maid of Honour increasing the distance between them at every field. The last they saw of her was "flying," as they called it, over a wide brook, at which, when they arrived, had they not been instigated to make the attempt by beholding the feat achieved by a woman, they would all without hesitation have declined anything so hazardous. Philip Dormer was first at the bank ; but his horse refused the leap. The Prince was a fearless rider ; he went boldly on ; his steed was good, but his strength unequal to

the task : he did not gain a secure footing on the opposite bank, and tumbled back with his rider into the stream. The consequences were nothing more dreadful than a good ducking to both ; for they soon managed to make good their landing, and away they started off again as though refreshed with their bath. The Prince turned his head round, for he heard a tremendous splash, and beheld the Duke floundering in the middle of the brook.

The fair equestrian began to feel extremely exhilarated. She had passed many of the best riders, and the noble animal she rode was galloping over a wide extent of stubble in a style that showed how little the pace had affected him. Now and then she heard the horn of some huntsman giving the usual notice to those who were within hearing of the direction the stag had taken. She could see the pack in full cry, though still at a considerable distance, with only about half a dozen persons before her. A beautiful landscape met her gaze marked by spires and farms, clumps of coppice, brown lands the labouring plough was then dividing, and green pastures where cows, oxen or sheep were spread about in numbers that showed the wealth of their owner. Beautiful

parks dotted here and there with gigantic trees that appeared to have been undisturbed tenants of the land for centuries, where herds of fallow deer stood quietly cropping the herbage till the cry of the hounds sent them in a resistless mass sweeping over the velvet sward till they were lost to sight in some neighbouring plantation, attracted her passing attention equally with the winding river with its pendant willows or alders, beneath which the angler was trolling for pike or the sportsman creeping in pursuit of wild fowl.

With the excitement created in her mind there came an elevation of sentiment, which taking its tone from her romantic studies, made the young Maid of Honour imagine herself on an equality with the most adventurous of her favourite heroines. She doubted whether even Statira though impelled by her love for Prince Oroondates, would have ventured to leap the terrible places she had that day been carried over by her good steed, and could not help entertaining a doubt that this sport in the days of the "illustrious Bassa" was attended with half the dangers found in a hunt with the King's buck hounds in England.

The chase continued to be a most severe one.

Several horses were knocked up. The more prudent riders had turned off, contenting themselves with what they had seen. The tired animals could not take the leaps that presented themselves, though far less formidable than many they had already gone over, and their owners were often obliged to ride along the side of a hedge, craning over to see how they might get through with the least exertion.

Even the hounds began to show symptoms of having had enough of it, which the poor stag had exhibited more conspicuously. He was seen about a couple of fields in advance of the yelping pack; and it might easily be predicted from the manner in which he went over the ground that he must soon give in. The stag, however, was by no means inclined to lessen his efforts to escape from his dangerous pursuers, and a wood at a little distance seemed to point out a ready means of evading them. He made one last effort, and was shortly lost to view among the trees. The pack followed; two or three huntsmen only were within a reasonable distance of them; they wound their horns before they plunged into the forest; but very few were in a condition to profit by the signal.

In a short time afterwards up came the Brigadier's daughter. She heard the cry of the exhausted hounds and the wind of the huntsmen's bugles, and went full speed in that direction. A broad path appeared to lead through the wood, and the elasticity of the turf seemed extremely agreeable to her excellent steed, who bounded over it apparently very little fatigued by the long and severe chase through which he had carried his fair rider so gallantly. She patted his neck, and he answered her caress by neighing and springing over the yielding turf as lightly as though he were Pegasus bearing Apollo to Olympus.

A mutual delight seemed to exist in the noble animal and his graceful rider, and each contrived for some time to give such tokens of satisfaction as the other could readily recognise. In this way they continued for a considerable distance. The path grew narrower, till at last the overhanging boughs could only with difficulty be avoided. Mary Lepel listened for the cry of the hounds or the notes of the horn, but for a long time could not hear either. At one time she fancied she heard such tones, but very faintly, and then began to doubt she had taken the right direction when entering the wood.

The road which she had recently been pursuing was but a narrow cart track, but even that track was soon lost, and it now appeared to be nothing more than a foot-path. This, however, to her great satisfaction presently was crossed by a broad cart road, into which she turned, as she thought in the direction pointed out so indistinctly by the last faint sounds of the hunting horn. She now allowed her horse to increase his speed, expecting to hear some sound that would assist her to regain the ground she had lost. But she proceeded nearly half a mile without hearing anything in any way resembling what she wanted.

Her position had become extremely embarrassing. She knew nothing of the direction the hounds had taken, she had not the slightest idea of where she was, and the unpleasant impression forced itself upon her, that she had lost herself in a wood the outlets of which she would find it almost impossible to discover from her entire ignorance of the place. She had not met a human being since she had entered it, and unless she could find some guide, she was apprehensive she might wander about till dark in its tortuous paths and irregular cart tracks.

This was indeed a position for a heroine, per-

plexing though it was. Still she was not alarmed, for she fancied that either a courteous knight, or friendly hermit must shortly make his appearance to direct her out of the labyrinth. But the people who had any business in the wood were of a very different class either to knights or hermits. Mary Lepel, however, had the fullest confidence in her own romantic fancies, and rode on in some little anxiety, it is true, but with a comfortable assurance such aid could not be very distant.

At last the creaking of a cart wheel varied the monotonous silence of the scene, and as she rode in the direction whence it proceeded, the fair equestrian met a sand cart driven by a great red cheeked, red haired young clown in a very soiled smock frock and very heavy ancle boots.

“Have you seen anything of the hounds?” inquired the young lady. The astonishment of the bumpkin at finding himself unexpectedly addressed by so lovely a creature in a costume evidently so strange to him, was beyond all conception. He could not have looked more awe-struck had he seen a ghost suddenly ride before him. The wide mouth opened to its full extent, and the large eyes were fixed in a stare of mingled wonder and alarm.

"Have you seen anything of the hounds, my friend?" she repeated in such melodious accents as had hitherto never met his ear.

"Ounds!" said the boy with a bewildered look, and an earnest scratching of the head.

"Yes, the King's hounds," she added.

"Keenszounds?" he repeated in a strong country dialect, evidently not aware of the meaning of the question, "he doant live in these parts."

The poor Maid of Honour was in despair at such stupidity. She, however, made another effort to extract information from her very rustic new acquaintance.

"Pray, my man, what name do you call this place?" she inquired.

"It be called Deadman's Dingle."

"Bless me, what a disagreeable name! And how far may it be to the nearest village?"

"Five mile."

"And which way must I go to reach it?"

"Strait as ye can go through Deadman's Dingle, till ye come to Squash Hollow, and then turn off to the sand pits, up the Lover's Walk, and round by the haunted beech, and over the marshes till ye get into Dumble's Lane; and Dumble's Lane will take ye out by Farmer Giles's barn,

then go right on till ye reach Hog's Common, and when ye get to Hog's Common any body will tell ye where Snickerton Snivey be."

"Thank you," she replied, and started off again at a gallop, leaving the boor gaping after her as long as she remained in sight, scratching his head and wondering what strange sort of creature it was he had just been speaking with.

Poor Mary Lepel! Not a quarter of what she had heard could she remember. She tried to recal the words as they had been uttered, but she could get hold of nothing but a confused jumble of Deadman's Dingle, Squash Hollow, Dumble's Lane and Snickerton Snivey, and presently found herself forced to give up the attempt in despair. At first she thought of riding back for clearer directions, but she was perfectly satisfied she should not succeed in obtaining anything intelligible from so very stupid a fellow.

The courteous knight or friendly hermit did not appear to be forthcoming; but she had scarcely gone half a mile before she discovered she was not altogether in solitude, for she was reminded there were other persons in the wood in a manner far from being agreeable.

"Your money or your life!" shouted a great

gaunt fellow, with desperado written in every lineament of his forbidding countenance, as he protruded his ragged person from a neighbouring clump of brushwood, beyond which the curling smoke made it appear as though there might there be a place of concealment for others beside the villain armed with the long horse pistol who thus menacingly made his appearance. The unexpected summons, however, startled the horse quite as much as it did his fair rider, and he went off with such speed that the footpad could only mutter a hearty execration, and return to his companion minus the booty he had thought within his grasp.

On went the unflagging steed at a racing pace, and on went the rider, somewhat alarmed, it is true, by the sudden apparition of so villanous looking a scoundrel; nevertheless, so strong was her ruling passion, that notwithstanding her fear and her anxiety she could not help feeling a secret satisfaction at having experienced so many adventures. The horse in a short time reduced his speed, and Mary Lepel was left to deliberate on the best plan of getting out of the apparently interminable wood. But as she knew as little of one path as of another, it was quite im-

possible she could arrive at any available way of finding the right one. As a last resource she thought of leaving this difficult matter to the guidance of her steed ; and laying the reins on his neck she suffered him to take whatever direction he pleased—a resource she remembered that had never failed when tried under similar circumstances by certain heroic personages of her acquaintance.

In her case, too, it was productive of the best effect. Not only did the sagacious animal conduct her safely out of the dreadful forest, but he proceeded on through several lanes as if perfectly aware of what he was about, till he came to a large park gate. A man standing near respectfully opened it, and the fair adventurer now found herself cantering along through one of the noblest parks she had ever beheld. She passed several domestics who exhibited towards her as much respect as though she were the mistress of the stately mansion that now became visible amongst the venerable trees.

After such a fearful ride, and after wandering about so long in perplexity and alarm, the young Maid of Honour was too glad of the rest and shelter that appeared so near, to disturb the course

of her horse, intruder though she felt she was; and she did not doubt that every attention would be readily rendered to her by the owner of this stately edifice, as soon as she could relate the adventure that had made her an involuntary trespasser on his property.

In this state of mind she still allowed her steed to have his own way, though his way appeared to her exceedingly singular. The horse went straight to the stables, where he stopped. Two or three active persons immediately made their appearance, and assisted the lady to dismount; and what greatly increased her surprise, they did not seem in any way astonished at her arrival.

"They must imagine I am an invited guest," thought she, as she sprung out of the saddle. Her surprise rose to wonder when she heard one of the grooms address the horse as an old acquaintance.

She had scarcely got her feet to the ground, when an elderly man in a rich livery presented himself before her, and in the name of his master, in the most courteous terms, invited her to honour his dwelling by entering it. The Maid of Honour soon found herself crossing a spacious

hall, through a double line of bowing domestics. Her heart felt unspeakably grateful for the prospect of rest and comfort which the many evidences of luxury and elegance that made themselves visible around her directly she entered this splendid mansion, held out to her.

Poor girl! Not very long after her arrival she had reason to wish herself back in the darkest recesses of the wood from which she had escaped, even with the risk of coming in contact with the formidable robber, whose demand on her purse had so alarmed her. There were few places less safe for her than the one to which she had, though she was quite unaware of it, designedly been conducted. The sagacious steed knew well the way to his own stables: and his bearing so fair a rider on that eventful day, formed part of a well laid scheme, laid by his owner to gain possession of her person.

CHAPTER V.

THE THREE GRACES.

Count all the advantage prosperous vice attains,
'Tis but what virtue flies from and disdains ;
And grant the bad what happiness they would,
One they must want, which is, to pass for good.

POPE.

THREE persons were enjoying themselves as completely as it was possible for any three persons to find enjoyment in the good things of this world. They had recently concluded a sumptuous banquet, and the array of wine-bottles, goblets, decanters, and glasses of the costliest description, with china plates, fruit, sweetmeats, biscuits, silver-mounted knives, and other evidences of a dessert, such as was usually brought to the tables of people of distinction, shewed that

the little party were not indisposed to gratify their palates with such luxuries as it was the fashion to associate with wine in after-dinner indulgences.

They were all free livers, and might have been styled epicures. Their pleasures were extremely animal. Eating was one of the principal enjoyments of their existence; and from the manner in which they applied themselves to the task of emptying the contents of the various wine-bottles down their throats, it was quite clear enough that drinking was another source of gratification that had few rivals in their affections.

It was no ordinary liquid that they were imbibing with so much relish; for wealth had made them fastidious. Their tastes were refined; they delighted in what was most choice. They were connoisseurs in rare wines, and critics in curious liqueurs. But it was the fashion at this period to regard quantity equally with quality; and excess was so much a matter of course in the symposia of men of quality, that a gentleman of any spirit would much rather get drunk upon small beer than keep sober upon Tokay.

All the little party who sat at this well supplied table, the reader has met with under circum-

stances much less luxurious. They were three of the leading members of the Hell Fire Club; but there existed in the appearance of the three *con-vives* none of that ruffianism which was so marked a characteristic when wearing the vulgar disguises they assumed amongst their fellow Mohocks. They now appeared in all the pomp of noblemen of the highest distinction; their costume boasted of velvet and embroidery, court-swords and ruffles, diamond rings, and gold buckles, and wigs of the most fashionable character.

In the youthful host will easily be recognised the profligate Duke of Wharton. The bold, free glance which characterized his scarcely-developed features was made more expressive by a smile of triumph, as he continued to drink his claret, and encourage the loquacity of his two noble guests.

There could scarcely have been a greater contrast than presented itself between them and himself. In them it was not difficult, despite the friendly aid of art, to distinguish the well-marked lineaments of the faded and worn-out libertine. The artificial colour might give a more youthful bloom to the cheek; but it could not hide the lines that an ill-spent life had marked so legibly. Nor could all the cosmetics in the world restore

to the sunken, crow-footed eye, the fire which once had lighted up its glance.

The apartment was well lighted ; but the wax, while it displayed the gorgeous paintings on the walls, rich with the glowing colours of Titian, Albano, and Carracci, also enabled the observer to note the ravages which Time and excess had made in the countenances of those old men. The reader need scarcely be told that these were those twins of folly and profligacy, the Dukes of Buckingham and Somerset.

The dark complexion and haughty cast of features of his Grace of Somerset now expressed the most intense self-complacency ; his toothless gums were in constant motion, as the wine unloosed his thoughts, and gave the necessary excitement to his enfeebled frame. His form was spare, and his hand shook with a sort of palsy, as he freely helped himself to the generous liquors so liberally provided for his entertainment.

Exactly opposite glowed the red face of his Grace of Buckingham :—a complexion his frequent potations had much more to do with, than health. His face was more solid than that of his associate ; but the flesh was flabby, the cheeks seeming almost as pendulous and as ruddy as the comb of

an old game cock. All were richly dressed in the prevailing mode, and though the extended corporation, and gouty legs of the Duke of Buckingham were not more lover-like than his countenance, his wig and dress were quite as youthful as those of his youthful host.

The old men were getting extremely communicative, and were evidently bent upon impressing on their youthful friend, the great success they had had amongst the ladies of their acquaintance:—each outboasting the other in the most extravagant manner, and scarcely waiting the conclusion of the anecdote to which he was required to listen to commence one intended to exceed it in presumption and mendacity.

The Duke of Wharton did not attempt to interrupt either of his guests. He seemed infinitely amused at the preposterous folly of assumptions of this nature by two such antiquated profligates; and the sense of his own personal advantages may have given to his countenance that air of extreme satisfaction which it so conspicuously expressed. His friends placed great reliance on their vast experience, and referred to it in a manner as though they thought little of their host's capabilities in the same field of enter-

prise. He laughed more than once; but it was much less at the wit his rivals displayed, than at the ideas that entered his own mind of the astonishment he was preparing for them.

“Apropos of fair women,” said the Duke of Buckingham, eagerly interrupting his companion, “in my youthful days, when I was at Breda with the King, at the time the rascally Round-heads had driven his sacred Majesty and his best friends out of England, I got acquainted with a lady of the fairest complexion I ever saw. She was a Dutchwoman.”

“A dairy maid, eh!—Buckingham?” exclaimed the other drily, “whose complexion had taken the tinge of the curd she handled, and who came to you as redolent of butter and milk as the cows under her charge.”

“Odd’s life!—no! She was the wife of the Commandant. A woman rather on a large scale it is true, for Dutch measurement is vastly excessive; but she was as delicate a piece of well-fed womanhood as could be found in Holland, or elsewhere. Pass the claret to Wharton, he don’t drink.”

“Thank you, and fill for yourself,” said the Duke of Wharton. “Then let us know some-

thing about your good fortune with the Commandant of Breda's beautiful wife."

"Oh ! I became acquainted with her in a mighty singular sort of manner. It was one of my earliest adventures. Yet I remember it as well as if it had taken place but yesterday. I was coming home to my lodgings after a roaring carouse with the King, and three or four more of us, at a time when his Majesty hadn't so much as a clean shirt to his royal back, and all his courtiers together could not have clubbed the value of a new doublet, of which most of us stood greatly in need ; and the toasts I had drunk to the speedy destruction of Noll, and all his canting crew had rather impaired the excellence of my vision, for I made my way to a large house at a different part of the town to where my more humble domicile was to be found. Nevertheless I was monstrous positive I had found the right house, and knocked up the inmates in the most determined manner."

"So the fair Dutchwoman opened it?"

"No, she didn't. It appeared that I had selected the Commandant's mansion for my untimely summons, and as his worship had left home on a visit to the Burgomaster, the people, assured it was the return of their gracious master,

hastened with a light to the door, in opening which the candle was blown out. I stalked in, and as usual in my own place, ascended the stairs, entered the apartment where a rushlight was dimly burning, and as I was, threw myself on the bed.

“‘Oh, my beloved Peterkin!’ exclaimed a soft, and not unmusical voice, as I felt myself enfolded in a pair of stout arms. ‘Oh, my beloved Peterkin! How impatiently has thy fond wife awaited thy return!’

“‘Eh—what?—Zounds!—Who the devil’s here?’ I cried not exactly comprehending what kind of intruder I had met with. A scream that might have startled the dead at the bottom of the Zuyder Zee brought a tribe of half-dressed male and female servants, each with a flaming candle. I stared, and the good lady stared; and the servants stared more than both of us put together.

“‘Who is this lady in bed with me?’ I coolly inquired.

“‘His Excellency the Commandant’s wife, Mynheer.’

“‘S’death! Where then am I?’ said I, observing the strange things around me.

“‘In his Excellency the Commandant’s bedroom, Mynheer,’ answered one.

“I then, quite thunderstruck, explained the mistake into which I had fallen, and made the most respectful apologies to the lady whose slumbers I had so rudely disturbed. The good lady took the matter much more passively than I had anticipated. The Commandant’s wife had screamed, and seemed to feel she had done her duty. She even was so complaisant as to regret the little disturbance I had so inadvertently made, and received my parting acknowledgments as I quitted her chamber with her domestics with the same placidity with which she would have replied to those of her lord. I did not fail to remark to myself, that her skin was the fairest I had ever seen. I renewed my acquaintance with her under equally favourable circumstances, that confirmed my first impression.”

The Duke emptied his glass, and refilled it; and his friends made some pertinent remarks on the surprising apathy of the amiable *frau*.

“That’s a curious introduction, certainly,” said the Duke of Somerset, after finishing another bumper. “But I remember an instance in which I was similarly situated. It was about the time of Monmouth’s foolish rebellion. I was on a visit to a relation in the North—”

"A distant relation, I should imagine, from his being so far off," said the Duke of Wharton, laughingly.

"He was a second cousin of my mother's," replied his Grace, joining in the laugh. "He was called Lord Bubblejock:—a stiff, wiry, old fellow to look at, as sharp as a Toledo, and almost as thin; and he had taken it in his head to marry a strapping wench, who some people said was a daughter of one of his tenants, whom he had first met minding her father's sheep. My bed-chamber adjoined that of my respected kinsman and his spouse, both of whom were vastly civil to me. Well, the second morning of my stay, I was awoke by a mighty unfriendly dig in my ribs, while a clear Scottish voice bellowed in my ear, 'Donald!—Donald! It's time to be ganging. Get up, man, and call the lassies!'

"I half rose from my recumbent position, and after I had rubbed my eyes well, to satisfy myself I was not in a dream, the first object that met my astonished gaze was a large Blowsabella sort of face, most unbecomingly swaddled up in a huge flannel night-cap. By all the gods, it was my Lady Bubblejock! How long she had been there, or how she got there, I never knew.

Roused by my exclamation of surprise, she started up with no less astonishment than I evinced.

“ ‘Hech, Sirs !’ she exclaimed with most amusing simplicity, ‘what’s your wull?’ and then, as if for the first time aware she was not in her own bed, with a terrified look and a manner monstrously diverting, she added : ‘Hoot awa ! I’m sair afraid, I’ve made a wee mistake.’ She darted away like a hare disturbed from her form, and was outside the room in a second.”

“Ah !” said the laughing host, passing the decanters to his guests, “accidents will happen in the best regulated families ; and there can be little doubt my Lady Bubblejock was not the first of her dear sex who had demonstrated in a similar manner to a man of such irresistible attractions as our friend Somerset, how much she enjoyed his society.”

“It is scarcely fair to tell such things,” said his Grace, pretending a vast deal of reserve ; “but I can very safely say, few men have been so fortunate as myself.”

“Yes, in our days, a pretty fellow was sure to be well cared for by the women,” said his Grace of Buckingham, “and as we tried all we

could to please them, we seldom had to complain of their disinclination to please us."

"Happy fellows!" exclaimed the Duke of Wharton, "fortunate dogs! Why was I born so much later?"

"Ah, the golden age for us was the reign of Charles II," observed the Duke of Buckingham; "it was an oligarchy of beauty! It was the paradise of mistresses! It was the Saturnalia of Love! What a loss it is your not having known, Wharton, the matchless creatures who adorned the Court at that period."

"One of them, at least, I have the honour of ranking amongst my acquaintances," said the Duke of Wharton, in a half derisive, half sarcastic tone.

"Zounds, Wharton, you're dreaming!" exclaimed his Grace of Somerset.

"No, indeed, I'm perfectly awake," replied the young Duke, "never more so; curse me! One of these matchless beauties exists in that intolerable old hag, the Duchess of Cleveland, whom I think the devil has either forgotten, or is not too eager to appropriate."

"She may be abominably the worse for wear,"

observed the Duke of Buckingham ; “ but a devilish nice creature she was at one time, as any man would care for. She rivalled in seductiveness the Duchess of Portsmouth—a Cleopatra worthy of such an Anthony, as his Majesty of blessed memory. Ah, many a time have I enjoyed a rapturous hour or two in her society, when the King was detained by his ministers, or engaged in other amusements. Poor Rowley had no suspicion of a rival.”

“ Yet I should doubt you were the only one,” said his host.

“ You might as well talk of an ant being the only one in an ant-hill,” replied the Duke of Somerset ; “ the Duchess of Portsmouth made her royal lover appear the queen-ant of an innumerable colony—and pretty productive to her they were.”

“ I can’t say the Duchess was exactly a Lucretia,” observed his Grace of Buckingham ; “ her conduct might have been indifferent enough ; but her person was far otherwise. Frenchwomen are proverbially fascinating, but Madame la Duchesse appeared to have studied the science of fascination to its highest point. She was the sort of woman to whom a man was sure to lose his heart,

but was pretty certain to send his senses after it."

"Did you lose one or both?" inquired the Duke of Wharton, drily.

"Oh, I couldn't help being prodigiously enamoured, she shewed me so many marks of her favour," answered his Grace of Buckingham; "in fact, she acknowledged I was the only man at Court, who could ever have gained her affections."

His Grace of Somerset cast a look upward of great significance.

"I hope you didn't take advantage of the extreme simplicity of the King's mistress?" inquired their young host very gravely.

This speech was too much for the risible muscles of the other elderly boaster, who although he drained his glass to conceal his mirth, could not avoid giving audible evidence of some part of it.

"But Nell Gwynne cured me of my passion for the Duchess," said the Duke of Buckingham, "Ah, Nelly was a rare creature; 'sdeath! such eyes! such a mouth! so tempting a figure! so seductive a countenance!—I soon threw myself in her way."

“And she told you to get out of it, and be hanged to you, I suppose,” observed his Grace of Wharton laughingly, as he rose to ring for a fresh supply of wine.

“No, I doubt Nelly was so civil as to *tell* him to get out of her way,” added his Grace of Somerset, as a smile of derision made itself visible on his saturnine physiognomy, “she would have *sent* him out of it, with mighty little ceremony.”

“She might have done so with some,” said the Duke of Buckingham, “I won’t say she might not have done so with my friend Somerset; but I had been an acquaintance of Nelly’s of a very long date. Many a time had I bought oranges of her for the purpose of more closely observing her blooming features.”

“Ah!” said the young Duke facetiously, “then even at that early stage your acquaintance was not without bringing forth fruit.”

It was not easy to say which of the guests laughed most; for one laughed as though availing himself of an opportunity for getting rid of no slight amount of derision he felt for his rival; and the other to prove how readily he could appreciate his host’s jest.

“Yes, it was so,” replied he: “the acquaint-

ance was renewed when, from a humble orange girl, Nelly had become the favourite of her sovereign; and I had no cause ever after to consider my sixpences ill laid out."

"Zounds! that is as much as to say you had held the King's favourite monstrous cheap," observed the Duke of Wharton. "But come, here is a fresh bottle. Wine and women are admirable subjects to discuss together; and wine, like this, I think you will find worthy of such association."

"'Tis indeed superlative!" said one.

"A glorious vintage certainly!" added the other.

Both the old gallants held their glasses to the light, and contrived to sip till they required replenishing. The conversation now took a turn in the direction of favourite wines; and the two seniors were as communicative on the subject of their experiences in the service of Bacchus, as they had been in that of Venus. Each outboasted the other in relating various drunken bouts in which he had been engaged in various parts of the world. They had drank Schiedam with the Hollander, Tokay with the Austrian, Champagne with the Frenchman, and Sherry with the Spaniard;

they had got roaring drunk upon punch, blind drunk upon usquebaugh, muddled with beer, and fuddled with cider. They had enjoyed every degree and species of intoxication. They had taken leave of their senses in every possible kind of company.

The Duke of Wharton had already gained an unenviable notoriety by his excesses; but he was ready to confess that his offences, heavy as they undoubtedly were, were light in comparison with those so fluently described by his venerable guests. It appeared as though they had qualified themselves for the highest degree in blackguardism, whilst he had been content to study for "a little go." But if he was astonished by the startling revelations he heard, he did not think proper to give his surprise an expression. Indeed, he listened with the same kind of smile with which he would have regarded a couple of apes mowing and chattering at each other in the same cage.

Their young host at last led them back to talk of their exploits in love making; and he did this as though he had an object in view. Perhaps as the wine of which they had drunk so copiously was now exercising its influence upon them, he desired to see to what extremity of conceit and

folly they could be made to go. They readily harked back to their former theme, beginning as usual to draw unfavourable comparisons between the handsome women of their younger days and the beauties of the present.

“Apropos of beauties,” said the young Duke, “what has become of the fair Wortley Montagu? Since her return from the East she has appeared so deucedly hipped, every one fancied she was sighing to return to the Grand Signor.”

“Oh she’s gone abroad again,” replied his Grace of Buckingham. “She found that she could not maintain a successful rivalry with younger and fresher beauties; and so as she could not endure to see the charms neglected that for several years made it appear as though she had been sent on earth to insure the happiness of all mankind, she quitted the scene, and has gone to live abroad.”

“Egad, poor Lady Mary is like an author that has outlived his reputation,” said his Grace of Somerset, “or a ribbon out of fashion. But she has had a long reign; and if report speak true, has been extremely kind to many persons who were so fortunate as to attract her attention—the Grand Signor among the number.”

"No, that has been contradicted," exclaimed the Duke of Wharton with a laugh. "It is said that she was obliged to give him up:—she found him such a Turk."

"Pope has been terribly scurrilous about her," observed the Duke of Buckingham when he had sufficiently enjoyed his friend's jest; "and to do her Ladyship justice, she has libelled him most abominably."

"Why a short time since hang me if such a pair of turtle doves were to be met with!" said their host.

"Oh a metamorphosis not in Ovid has transformed the doves into hawks," cried the Duke of Somerset; "and we now are allowed to see the fallacy of the old proverb, 'Hawks do not pick out hawks e'en.'"

"Well I have no reason to complain of her," said his Grace of Buckingham with a smile of peculiar meaning. "She knew how to make herself agreeable, I must acknowledge; but she possessed nothing of the fascination so remarkable in the women of some thirty years ago. Ah those creatures! they were quite of another race. Zounds, they were divine!"

His Grace tossed off his wine with an air half of

enthusiasm, half of despair, that the time to which he alluded should have passed for ever.

“Yes,” said the Duke of Somerset, with something of commiseration in his manner. “We can congratulate ourselves that we lived at a period when woman was to be met with in that degree of physical perfection whence she could only recede. The women of the present day are altogether inferior. Egad, they do not seem to be of the same species.”

“’Sdeath, that is a melancholy piece of information!” exclaimed the young Duke, striving to retain his mirth, and plying his already half-intoxicated guests with more wine. “I am quite in despair—positively desperate with having so poor a prospect before me. Nevertheless, there are some women of the present day, who I think might reconcile me to this terrible falling off in female attraction. There is a certain young Maid of Honour—”

“Molly Lepel!” cried both his seniors in an instant; and their fishy eyes all at once assumed an unusual brightness; and their features became full of animation.

“Ah!” said his Grace of Somerset rapturously, “she is a glorious exception.”

"Zounds," added his Grace of Buckingham with the same warmth, "Molly Lepel is worthy of the last century."

"Egad, the very mention of her name is an inspiration," exclaimed one.

"'Sdeath! her beauty would ravish an ancho-rite," cried the other.

"On my honour I would risk anything. I would dare anything, I would suffer anything—to secure her smiles," murmured the first.

"D—n it, man, I would sacrifice half my fortune to possess her," added the other.

The Duke of Wharton heard the rhodomontades of these antiquated lovers with the same expressive smiles he had listened to their boastings; but he allowed them to go on uninterrupted—their foolery was amusing.

"By the way, talking of that dear creature," said he at last as if a sudden thought had struck him, "do you remember the wager we made at the club some time ago about her?"

"Remember it!" cried his Grace of Buckingham, with an air of extreme confidence, "of course I do."

"Yes," said his Grace of Somerset, looking equally content, "I have never forgotten it, or its lovely object."

"Her health in bumpers!" exclaimed the other, filling his glass as well as his unsteady hand would allow. "May she soon bless one who has so long been the most ardent of her adorers."

"Molly Lepel!" cried his rival, pouring the wine, in his blindness, outside the rim of his glass, and then taking it up empty. "Oh, that exquisite face—would that these eyes could feast on its unrivalled loveliness!"

"That wish is not very difficult to realise," observed their host, stifling a laugh that rose on beholding the stare of stupid surprise his guest exhibited on finding no wine in his glass. "I merely alluded to the subject because I intended claiming my wager. Madam Lepel is now under my protection."

"'Sdeath! Madam Lepel *here*?" shouted both, jumping from their seats with an expression of the most intense amazement and incredulity.

"Madam Lepel here! The young, the modest, the graceful Molly Lepel in *this* house!" continued the Duke of Buckingham. "Ten thousand devils! 'tis incredible!"

"Zounds, 'tis impossible!" said the Duke of Somerset.

"I don't believe a word on't," added the other.

“Well, seeing’s believing, gentlemen!” observed the young Duke, quietly rising from the table and ringing a small hand-bell, which was immediately answered by a footman. “Be so good as to tell Madam Lepel,” said he, addressing his servant, “that the Duke of Wharton desires the honour of her company.”

As the servant retired, the two seniors looked at each other, the very pictures of dismay and apprehension.

“By — it’s all a trick!” cried the Duke of Buckingham, as he thought of the last communication he had received from his active agent, Captain Spatterdash, who held out hopes to him that the young Maid of Honour would be placed in his possession within a week.

“No, no, it *can’t* be!” exclaimed the Duke of Somerset in the same confident manner, as he recalled the assurance of his skilful agent, Jack Wildair, that the beauteous Lepel should be his own in less than eight and forty hours.

The folding doors of the dining room opened. A lady, elegantly dressed, walked into the apartment. Fuddled as the senses of the old gallants were with their frequent potations, one glance was enough. No one could mistake the matchless form

and countenance before them. They stood as if transfixed to the spot as their young host fell back in his seat, and burst into a loud and scornful laugh. It was the Maid of Honour.

CHAPTER VI.

JUPITER AND DANAE AT LEICESTER HOUSE.

Why do you follow still that wandering fire
That has misled your weary steps, and leaves you
Benighted in a wilderness of woe;
That false Lothario.

WILLIAM LILLO.

Two persons stood in the recess of one of the windows belonging to an ante-room in Leicester House, their figures nearly concealed by the heavy draperies; and they were conversing in a low voice scarcely above a whisper—pretty conclusive evidence that their communication was confidential.

“Now, my adored Sophy,” said the soft seductive voice of Anthony Lowther, “it’s devilish provoking positively, but it cannot be helped. That crabbed old father of yours says I shan’t have

you, and chose to put on a mighty independent way of telling one so. You know my devotion, my sweet love ! it is for you to say whether I am to be the very happiest of men, or the miserablest wretch on earth. I don't know though, if the worst come to the worst, how I can break off all at once that sweet communion of soul which has existed between us so long. I vow now you have made yourself so very dear to me, life will be a burthen without you."

"But there can be no occasion for a separation !" exclaimed the trembling voice of the now timid Sophy Howe. "Let us wait for better times. My father will alter ; will think better of you, and more of his daughter."

"Don't imagine such a thing, my adored Sophy. Be assured he is one of the old stiff Buckrams that make it a point to be as obdurate and tyrannical as possible, that they may show their power. It's cursed unlucky. I wouldn't have had it happen for a trifle ; for, after winning such a prize, it's enough to drive one desperate to be obliged to resign it. But, egad, if it can't be helped, one must needs submit with the best grace one can."

"Nay, Anthony, the case may not be so bad as

you think. I will myself see my father and implore his consent!"

"Such a measure would be worse than useless, my adored Sophy. The old boy is so exasperated on the subject, that he would not be brought to hear reason from any one. I am devilish cut up about it; but we must learn to bear our misfortunes patiently."

His fair companion looked at him reproachfully. All that boldness which had once characterised her, had completely vanished. She seemed sensible of her lover's indifference, and the tears rose unbidden in her eyes. Anthony Lowther gazed on, very little moved, yet fully satisfied the game was in his own hands.

"And is this to be the end of all your protestations?" she inquired with a faltering voice. "After all your entreaties, vows, prayers, and promises, you are ready to agree to a separation as if it was the most natural and pleasant proceeding in the world. What am I to think of this?"

"Positively, my beloved Sophy, I am in no way to blame. You must be well aware I love you to distraction, and am ready to risk anything to prove how inexpressibly dear you are to me. But there are but two things to be done; one is to

obtain your father's consent, which I know he will never give ; and the other—the other is—”

“What is the other?” she inquired faintly.

“To do without it,” was the brief reply. There was a pause of several minutes. The tempter eyed his victim with a shrewd calculating glance, endeavouring to read in her flushed cheek and heaving bosom, the chances he possessed of succeeding in his enterprise.

“Trust to me, my adored Sophy,” he at length murmured ; “and be assured, your happiness shall ever be my unremitting care. I’m deucedly vexed the affair could not be managed in accordance with your wishes ; but I am positive we can arrange it quite as well. I live but for you, my charmer ; let us live for each other.”

What the imprudent Maid of Honour would have said to this temptation cannot be stated, as the lovers were interrupted by a step in the ante-room.

“*Ma foi !*” exclaimed Mary Bellenden, as she approached the window, “I protest I should have taken you for a couple of ghosts, you were so quiet up in this corner. *Pardonnez-moi* if I have intruded on your privacy. I merely came to tell you we have heard some intelligence of

our dear Molly Lepel, who so mysteriously disappeared during the last stag-hunt."

"Well, I am mightily glad of that," said Sophy Howe.

"But it is a strange business, *ma chère*," she continued. "I can scarcely believe it. Indeed, it is *très extraordinaire*. I cannot comprehend it. She is said to be with the Duke of Wharton, at one of his houses in the country."

"Egad, nothing more likely," said Anthony Lowther, as if he had long anticipated it.

"I am surprised, indeed!" exclaimed Sophy Howe.

"Well, I cannot stay, good people," added Mary Bellenden: "I have much work in hand. I leave you to the enjoyment of your *tête-à-tête*; *au revoir*." She then passed out of the apartment, and making her way through the attendants in the next chamber, she proceeded through a handsome suite of rooms; not, however, without entertaining some opinions of her own respecting the intimacy of the two persons with whom she had just parted. In the midst of such reflections she arrived at a door, at which she knocked; but receiving no answer, she opened it. The first object that met her observation was

the figure of a man standing before a picture. It was the portrait of a young and beautiful woman : and the spectator was so absorbed in his observation, that he did not notice the entrance of his visitor. There could be no mistake as to who was the person gazing so intently on the portrait. The plain suit, the ill-dressed wig, the awkward figure would have pointed him out among a thousand. It was the Prince of Wales.

But who could be the lady who had so completely succeeded in fixing the Prince's very eccentric attentions? Mary Bellenden saw at once it was not a face with which she was acquainted ; she had never seen it before, and did not think the original belonged to the Court. Possibly, she fancied, it was the likeness of a lady from whom the Prince had been obliged to part, and whom he had left behind him in Germany.

He continued to stand motionless before it ; and Mary Bellenden distinctly heard a deep drawn sigh. " Ah ! " thought she, " the poor Prince must be more than usually attached. I should never have given him credit for so much sentiment."

“*Bon Dieu !*” exclaimed she aloud, “am I mistaken ; or, have I the honour of seeing the Prince of Wales ?” His Royal Highness turned quickly round, and his visitor noticed with increased surprise traces of tears upon his homely face. “Poor man,” thought the young lady, with no slight commiseration, “he feels the separation mightily !”

“Ah, Madam Pellenden !” exclaimed the Prince, striving to put on a cheerful appearance. “Vat for you come ? But I veel mosh bleasure, very mosh bleasure, to see you looking so sharming, mine tear shild.”

“*Ma foi !* I protest now I was apt to fancy I was intruding,” said the lady archly. “*Parbleu !* it is long since I have beheld such intense affection, as I could not help seeing, exists between your Royal Highness and the fair original of the beautiful portrait on which you were gazing, when I entered.”

The Prince looked in the direction Mary Pellenden pointed, and a shade of melancholy passed over his features. She observed it, and regretted she had made any allusion to the subject, as it was quite certain it was a painful one.

“Ah, mine tear Madam Pellenden,” replied the

Prince sadly, "if dat bortrait could speak, it would mosh surprise you, mine tear lofe."

"Nothing more probable," readily answered the lady, "as I cannot but acknowledge I should be vastly surprised at hearing a picture make a speech!"

"But dat is not mine meanings, you bretty rogue," said his Royal Highness. "Come gloser to it; look vell at it, observe vid all your eyes. You see der bortrait of von of der peautifullest vomans in her fader's Court; for she was a Princess."

"A Princess! then, what obstacle—"

"Vell, she vas in lofe vid a Prince, who was ver mosh in lofe vid her; but her fader say, 'No, you shall have your cousin, my bruder's son, who shall inherit both our governments.' So he made her leave her vriends, and a home she loved, to aggompany her husband to der seat of his fader's government. The change vas terrible: but she got used to it, py-and-py, and made her name vamous for being von goot vife, and von admirable mutter."

"*Ma foi!* I do not think I should have proved myself so accommodating."

"No, dat is imbossible. Vell, Madam Pellenden,

dis goot vife is now neglected and ill-used by her husband, who cares only for some pad vomans whose dupe he is ; and dis boor lady has only von vriend near her, a goot gentleman she had known from her childhood. Vell, dese bad vomans bersuade her husband he visit her for imbrober burboses ; and though dere is noting at all to be proved against him, they murder him zecretly, and more, they put her into von glose brison—away from her vriends, her children, hēr barents, and every poty ; and, O mine Gott ! her children grow up and are made to think ill of their mutter, till by chance dey get at der druth.”

“ Who was this poor lady ? ” said Mary Belenden ; “ I cannot but feel interested in so sad a story.”

“ Dat poor lady,” replied the Prince, solemnly, “ dat boor lady is mine mutter.”

“ Your mother ? ” she cried in astonishment.

“ Yes, mine poor mutter,” replied the Prince, and tears again came into his eyes. “ I remember dat for von long time, I vish to pehold mine mutter. I long to zee her. But I am told I need not drouble myself : but I long to zee her very mosh ; and von day ven I vas out hunting, I escaped from my attendants, and runned away in

the direction I knew mine poor mutter vas confined. I am please—I am rejoiced, I shall zee mine mutter. But just as I get to der place, I am overtaken by der people, and prought back. Now she has been in brison from twenty to dirty years, and I have never peen allow to see her zince she left der palace.”

“*Mon Dieu*, what barbarity!” exclaimed Mary Bellenden.

“I am zo many years older,” continued the Prince, evidently much affected; “yet, for all dat, I have still so much lofe for mine poor mutter, I vould do anyting to get her out of der vile brison vere she is kept. But mine fader, influenced by der dam antiderluvian grockodiles, who hate her for being so mosh better dan demselves, keeps her close, and vill not let me do anyting in her pehalf; vor if I so mosh as mention her name, he fly into von terrible bassion, and der dam antiderluvian grockodiles do all dey are able to make matters vorse.”

“This is very strange,” said Mary Bellenden. “I should not have thought the King could have behaved with such injustice.”

“Bah!” cried the Prince much excited, “you shall look all over der vorld and shall not meet

vid so apominable tyrant. Ah mein Gott! he vent to Hanover to dake measures for breventing her escape, and he is gome back more zuspicious, more revengeful, more bassionate against both her and me dan he vas pefore. He is ever purst-ing out into der most horrible storms of bassions, and always zeems as though he had not a-dort peyond der zecurity of his imbrizoned gonzort.”

Mary Bellenden had noticed the King’s conduct more than once as being extremely strange and wild. She knew not to what cause to attribute it.

“I only vish,” exclaimed the Prince, “vor der time to gome ven I shall be my own master, and there shall be no more faders nor tyrants. I vill soon zee justice done on all her enemies; and dat old fox Bernstorf, and dat old wolf Bothmar, and those dam antiderluvian grockodiles der Schulenberg and der Kielmansegge shall vind dey have got anoder master—der Teufel seize dem all, every man Shack!”

It may readily be imagined from these revelations that Lord Bellenden’s daughter enjoyed a large share of the Prince’s confidence. Indeed there could be no doubt to the young lady herself,

nor to many shrewd lookers on, that it would be her own fault if she did not fill the same place in his favour, as according to public report, Mrs. Howard possessed.

The Prince continued the conversation with more emotion than his fair companion could have given him credit for, and described how the innocent Sophia Dorothea had been sacrificed to the revengeful feelings of his father's and grandfather's mistresses. It was a sense of the injustice he had committed, in a mind in complete subjection to his worthless favourites, that had produced in the King those feelings of remorse, that perpetual fear, and those bursts of passion with which the reader has been made acquainted. It was a strange feature in this extraordinary case, that although in his heart the old King felt convinced his imprisoned Consort was guiltless of the accusations her enemies brought against her, the very mention of her name was enough to throw him into a fit of such excessive irritability that no member of his family dared to venture a word in her behalf. To such an extent had this seeming animosity arrived, that her son had been obliged most carefully to secrete the portrait he had with great difficulty obtained, and could only gaze upon it by stealth.

When Mary Bellenden had delivered the message with which she had been sent by the Princess, and had expressed her sympathy in the cause of his unhappiness, she took her leave of the Prince; but what she had heard and seen made a powerful impression upon her, and gave her a key to many mysterious things with which she had previously been greatly troubled.

The King had certainly returned from his journey to his German dominions in a more unsettled state of mind than he had known at his departure. He had made Baron Bothmar the jailor of his imprisoned Consort, and believed he had taken every precaution by placing persons on whom he could implicitly rely, as guards or spies over her to prevent her escape; nevertheless he was haunted more vividly than ever with apprehensions of her effecting her liberation, and exciting a war against him which might deprive him both of his beloved electorate and his valuable kingdom—a contingency that was doubtless held *in terrorem* before him by his Hanoverian counselors and their confederates the Turkish Pages of the Back-stairs, whose influence over him was quite as powerful. A reconciliation had been effected between him and the Prince of Wales, but

as he knew the feelings with which his son regarded his mother's incarceration, there was no genuine affection between them. It was evident his ugly mistresses were in greater favour than ever, for soon after his return one of his first acts was to ennoble them.

The Schulenburg was raised to the dignity of Duchess of Kendal, and rumours got abroad that the King had married her. One of his daughters by her received the title of Countess of Walsingham; and as it was well known her mother had amassed immense wealth by her plundering propensities, several of the courtiers became particular in their attentions to both. Among others, Philip Dormer had become a frequent visitor at the Duchess's private apartments, and reports were in circulation that said a great deal in favour of his prudence and circumspection, and some other very courtier-like qualities.

The Kielmansegge became Countess of Darlington, and her devotion to Schiedam continued fully equal to her more elevated associate's devotion to several fashionable sectarian ministers, who preached long sermons containing more denunciation than doctrine. The King went regularly as usual to that part of the palace where his

mistresses were so comfortably lodged, and regularly cut out of a certain quantity of paper a certain number of little figures, till conversation commencing allowed his companions an opportunity for obtaining what they wanted, and for increasing the ferment in his troubled mind against his unhappy consort. The visit having extended the usual time, the King took his departure in the usual way, leaving the sultanas of his harem to have recourse as soon as they pleased to their customary sources of consolation for the trouble they had been put to in receiving so unentertaining a visitor.

The heir apparent, as has just been hinted, had become extremely enamoured of Mary Bellenden. Indeed to do him justice it might be said he felt equally affectionate towards all the fair Maids of Honour in attendance on his consort; but of these, Fanny Meadows looked so alarmed when he offered any particular attention, Sophy Howe seemed so completely absorbed by her passion for Anthony Lowther, and Molly Lepel was so indifferent, whilst Mary Bellenden alone appeared sufficiently gratified by his compliments—one of her Parisian accomplishments by the way—that feeling she would give him the least trouble, he

seriously set himself to work to make her all his own, after the manner from time immemorial in use by members of his august family.

Probably Lord Bellenden's daughter might have been elevated to the dignity to be found in a marriage with the left hand, had she played her cards properly. But this resource of royal lovers in Germany was not at this time sufficiently appreciated in England; and the Prince determined on making his approaches to her heart in a style eminently characteristic of the sort of mind he possessed. Perhaps he had heard of the classic fable of Jupiter and Danaë, but possibly he had heard only of the vulgar notion of omnipotence said to be possessed by the precious metal, and this he decided should be his "Open Sesame."

It was on the day following her discovery of his affection for the hapless Sophia Dorothea, she was sitting by herself in an apartment to which the Maids of Honour usually repaired when not in attendance, when the door opened and in walked her royal lover. He entered with a particularly jaunty air; yet there was an evident embarrassment with it that made his customary awkwardness more conspicuous than usual.

"Ah mine lofe!" he exclaimed holding out

both his hands, with his cocked hat under his arm, "I am sharmed to zee you look so peautiful as der boets and der bainters could not con-zieve."

"*Je vous remercie, mon cher Prince,*" replied the young lady curtseying with French grace, as she withdrew the hand her lover had raised to his lips after giving it a shake more cordial than agreeable, "your compliments are becoming every day more *recherché*. May I ask what has brought me the honour of your Royal Highness's visit?"

"Oh mine lofe, you shall zee prezently—you shall, mine zweet lofe," said the Prince looking extremely tender, and trying to be equally affectionate; "but why you avoid me mine tear, mine angel, mine tarling! are you so cold dat you vold your arms and stand at a distance vrom me, like a zentinel at his bost?"

"No, I'm not cold, but I like the position," answered the young lady.

"Like der bosition!" exclaimed her lover, "no it is pad bosition for zuch a beautiful greature; I azzure you, mine zweetest tear, it is mosh petterest to be gloser, and is more agribble pesides. I would bress you to mine heart—"

“Your most obedient,” cried the laughing girl, eluding his grasp, and resuming her attitude at a more safe distance. “*Ma foi*, your gallantry I am afraid, will put your Royal Highness to a deal of needless trouble.”

“No drouble but a bleasure, mine lofe,” said the Prince, “now don’t stand looking at me vid your arms volder; vat you do it vor?”

“Oh, *mon Prince*, perhaps it is to show your Royal Highness I know how to keep my distance.”

“But I not vant you to keep your distance, you zaucy littel puss; I vant you to be as near as possible, mine tear lofe.”

“Vastly good of you, I dare say; but if your Royal Highness will excuse me—”

“No, I vill not exguse noting—I never exguse der bretty vomans; so you must gome gloser mine lofe, or I shall not know vhat to do vid mine zelf, I lofe you so mosh.”

The entreaties of the Prince were in vain, the Maid of Honour continued to retain the attitude his Royal Highness so little approved of, and the distance from him he liked still less.

“Well, my tear lofe,” said the Prince after a while, as he sat himself in a chair and placed his

cocked hat between his knees, "I tell you vat I vill do vor you. You zee all dis gold," the Prince produced from his pocket a handful of guineas, "dis shining bretty gold. It is all for you, mine lofe, if you likes, mine tarling littel tear!"

"For me, Prince!" cried the young lady, "no, indeed, it cannot be."

"Yes, it is vor you, all dis gold, and more if you likes; let me zee how mosh is here," he began counting and dropping the coin into his hat. "Ten, vifteen, dwenty, dwenty-vive, dirty guineas."

"Dirty guineas, undoubtedly," answered Mary Bellenden, as an idea of his meaning darted into her mind, "dirty guineas to be applied to a dirty purpose."

"Dirty porpus! it is for no dirty porpus; but for yourself, all dis bretty gold, if you have a mind. Dirty-vive, vorty, vorty-vive, vivty; yes, dere is vivty golden guineas vor you mine lofe, you shall have dem all if you is agribble; vivty-vive, zixty—"

"I should be more pleased were your Royal Highness to count your money elsewhere;" said Lord Bellenden's daughter, who became a little annoyed at being considered purchaseable after so very mercantile a fashion.

“Zixty-vive, zeventy,” continued the Prince, “zeventy-vive, eighty, eighty-vive, ninety, ninety-vive, von hondred ! Yes, mine tear lofe, you shall have von hondred guineas. Oh, such bretty money !”

Mary Bellenden drew near—his Royal Highness thought the temptation was working, and he brought more gold from his pockets, which he continued to count into his hat.

“Von hondred and vive, von hondred and ten, von hondred and vivteen, von hondred and dwenty. Vhat, mine zweetest greature vill not von hondred and dwenty guineas gontent you ? Oh, you ongonscionable little djew ! I have great mind to apandon so exbensive a pargain.”

Mary Bellenden drew closer, with her eyes very intently fixed upon the rich heap in the hat. The Prince felt assured the lure was drawing the game towards him ; a little more and it would be his own.

“Von hondred and dwenty-vive, von hondred and dirty ! Mine Gott, vat have you peen done !”

The Prince was brought to a sudden stop in his calculations with the little speech we have just given, for as he announced the last number, and placed the additional five guineas in

his hat, one of the prettiest feet in the world, in a momentary forgetfulness of the respect due to the rank of the illustrious counter, kicked up the hat and scattered its golden contents all over the room.

The Prince dropped down on his knees, and began recovering his treasure as fast as he could, as the lovely Maid of Honour ran laughing out of the apartment. His Royal Highness in the very awkward position he had chosen lifted up his head, and beheld her making her exit.

“Stop, mine zweetest lofe!” he cried on his hands and knees, “vhat vor you runned away? Don’t be so voolish; nopody shall know noting apout it!” But to his Royal Highness’s extreme astonishment the young lady did not pay him the slightest attention.

In an adjoining room she came suddenly upon Colonel Argyle. For some time past, the conduct of the Colonel towards the fair Maid of Honour had been exceedingly reserved; indeed as distant as persons who can scarcely be said even to be acquaintances. Colonel Argyle had noticed the proceedings of his rivals, and believing his mistress took more pleasure in the Prince’s attentions than he thought becoming, he

suspended his own. This impression had lately gained much strength, and in consequence he chose to avoid her, as much as was in his power.

“Well met, *mon cher Colonel*,” said Mary Belenden on observing her lover’s astonishment at beholding her, “where are you bound in such a hurry, *eh mon ami*?”

“I am going to wait on the Prince,” exclaimed Colonel Argyle, coldly.

“*Ma foi*, are you indeed! Make haste then, and you will find him in my room.”

“In your room!” he repeated in accents of surprise, as he gazed on her flushed cheeks in evident alarm.

“*Sans doute*; the Prince has just paid me a visit, and has shewn towards me an extraordinary degree of liberality. *Parbleu!* his feelings in my favour must be unusually powerful, for he actually offered me a hat full of guineas.”

Colonel Argyle listened in mute astonishment; but with a remarkably grave air. His companion laughingly added:

“Yes, *mon ami*, and I could not resist the temptation—”

His look became quite stern.

“Nor did I resist the temptation, *mon cher Colonel!*”

The gentleman now made a formal bow, and a motion as though about to take his departure.

“Nor did I resist the temptation,” she added, “of kicking the contents of the cocked hat into the air.”

“Eh! what? my dear Mary!” cried Colonel Argyle, suddenly turning back with as altered an appearance, as it was possible to have been shewn by any one in so short a time. “You spurned the bribe then?” and he took her hand and gazed with a glance of the deepest affection into her lovely face.

“*Ma foi*, to be sure I did!” she exclaimed laughingly, “and if you make haste to my room, you will be in time to see his Royal Highness sprawling on his hands and knees as I left him, industriously engaged in recovering the scattered guineas from the floor.”

Colonel Argyle rapturously kissed the fair hand he held.

“The fact is,” she continued, “I spurned the bribe, as you call it, *mon cher*; in the first place, because I did not particularly want one, and in

the second place, for some time past I considered my heart engaged to another."

The Colonel thought of the numerous circle of admirers he had seen round his beautiful mistress, and again looked grave.

"Yes, *mon cher Colonel*," said she with one of her sweetest smiles, "I certainly considered my heart the property of a gentleman who had been vastly civil to me, and to whom in return I was inclined to show how grateful I could be; but I protest to you, he would not allow me the opportunity I wanted. *Ma foi*, he kept aloof, and allowed me to be surrounded by a great many cavaliers, who I must say did their best to prevent my not missing the attentions of the only man my heart cared for."

"I hope the gentleman at last became acquainted with his good fortune; Madam," said the Colonel coldly.

"*Ma foi*, why yes, he has become acquainted with it; but the provoking creature seems mighty indifferent upon the subject."

"Good Heavens, Madam, who can he be!"

"He's called Colonel Argyle, Sir."

The reader need not be carried farther into this scene; he can readily imagine the gentleman's

delight, and the lady's satisfaction at beholding such unquestionable evidences of it. Some confidential conversation followed, the purport of which will be declared in due time.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR HEROINE IN A CRITICAL POSITION.

..... would you know the passion,

You have kindled in my breast ?

Trifling is the inclination

That by words can be expressed.

In my silence see the lover ;

True love is by silence known ;

In my eyes you'll best discover,

All the power of your own.

VOLTAIRE TO MARY LEPEL.

THE Brigadier's daughter found herself in as dangerous a position as it was possible for so young and beautiful a creature to be placed. All the perils she had gone through in the stag hunt, all the terrors she had had to experience at the time of her abduction by Baron Bothmar, sunk into insignificance in comparison with the evils associated with her present position. The reputation of a female who had the misfortune to reside under the same roof with the Duke of

Wharton was gone for ever—his character being so notorious; and when it became public that Mary Lepel was an inmate of one of his country residences, so well known for the scenes of wickedness that had been acted within its walls, the penalty she must incur could not be less than entire loss of character.

She had had much acquaintance latterly with his Grace; but she had no means of judging of his disposition, save by such traits of his character as fell under her observation. He had sought to appear before her in as amiable a light as possible, and she had seen nothing in his behaviour more objectionable than that of many other young men of the period. Nevertheless, she had heard at Court things respecting him sufficient to have excited distrust. Even her kind and careful patroness the Princess took the trouble of warning her of his reckless and licentious character; these representations, however, had produced less effect than might have been anticipated from them. The standard of manly virtue was not very high in the fashionable world, and the young Duke's excesses were of too common occurrence to produce the disgust they ought.

At the worst the Maid of Honour beheld in him only a young rake of high rank, who appeared in his attentions to her as if he were desirous of reforming his conduct. Fortunately for her, engrossed by her own ideal of what was most admirable in the manly character, drawn from her recollections of the incomparable Prince Oroondates, the unceasing efforts of this noble profligate to gain her affection were completely futile. She tolerated his devotion without returning it in the slightest degree.

When she discovered that she was an inmate of one of the Duke's mansions, and ascertained the well-laid scheme which had led her there, all she had heard to his prejudice recurred to her with terrible force, and she became quite alive to the responsibility she had incurred by voluntarily, as it might be represented, entering his Grace's house.

Her courage and presence of mind, however, never forsook her. She had known, in her romantic course of study, more than one case in many respects similar to her own; and she could not for a moment doubt that she should soon meet with the usual good fortune of distressed heroines, in the shape of some extraordinary interposition in her favour.

She therefore conducted herself towards his Grace much as though she were his voluntary guest, and to all appearance did not entertain the slightest apprehension for herself. She was towards him just as easy, as graceful, and as pleasant as she had been at their numerous colloquies at Hampton Court or Leicester House; but when she obeyed the summons to the Duke's dining room, in the manner described in a preceding chapter, and found that, instead of one licentious peer whose advances she must guard against, she had three, she was obliged to acknowledge to herself that the most admired of her favourites, Cleopatra, Clelia, or Cassandra had never experienced so delicate an embarrassment.

Still that happy confidence she felt in the inexhaustible resources of distressed heroines supported her under such trying circumstances, and in the short time she remained in the apartment, by a few sprightly yet ambiguous observations, she contrived to create in the minds of the Dukes of Somerset and Buckingham an impression that, notwithstanding appearances, she was not there by choice, and therefore might the more easily be reconciled to place herself under their protection: consequently when they left the house, they im-

mediately set at work every available engine to get her out of the young Duke's power into their own. Captain Spatterdash and Jack Wildair were instantly put on the right scent, and each was directed to spare neither trouble nor expense to obtain their object.

The Duke of Wharton was the most profligate of the rakes of that licentious age, and he was not likely to use much ceremony with a woman so completely in his power as the Brigadier's daughter; but her judicious policy in behaving to him with the same playful ease that had previously marked her conduct, appeared to leave him no excuse for becoming offensive, and his bravado to his antiquated rivals having betrayed her hiding place, reckless as he was, he was not inclined to excite the resentment which would arise from so many powerful quarters, were he to take an ungentlemanly advantage of the young lady being under his roof.

In her female attendant the young Maid of Honour had the good fortune to recognise a young woman, once her father's servant, the Mrs. Kitty introduced to the reader in an early chapter of this work. She retained her prepossessing features, though there was an effrontery in her beha-

viour which declared that in some respects her character had not improved since she quitted Petersham Manor. Her present service was no recommendation, but it was at least so far to her credit that she was quite tired of it, and gladly volunteered to do all in her power to serve her former young mistress in the critical position in which she was now placed.

Mary Lepel's extreme beauty, her perfect modesty, and her graceful and winning manners made an extremely powerful impression upon a nature perhaps not previously disposed to appreciate such qualities. Mrs. Kitty was very respectful, and very devoted. She could not understand, however, the appearance of content, if not of satisfaction, which the young lady exhibited—her conduct was so completely different from that of her numerous predecessors in the same apartment, that Mrs. Kitty found it impossible to find a reason for it. Had she discovered that such a trick as that practised by her unworthy master at the King's hunt had been played upon *her*, she should either have cried her eyes out, or have scratched out those of the first person who sought to detain her against her will. Instead of which the astonished Abigail observed from day to day the same

air of confidence and gratification in the young lady that had distinguished her first hour's residence. She could not make it out at all.

There was another person still more puzzled by this singular line of conduct. This was the Duke of Wharton. He could not help entertaining an involuntary feeling of respect whenever he approached his fair captive. The pretty creature met him with the same graceful cordiality which had distinguished her behaviour towards him at Court. He was doubtful as to what he should do under such peculiar circumstances. She did not appear to consider herself a prisoner, never made the slightest allusion to her detention, did not so much as hint a wish of returning to her friends, and took no notice whatever of the ingenious trick which had led to her entering his house.

The Duke could not avoid being courteous to her; in spite of himself, his conduct in her presence was ever marked by decency and good breeding. He might approach her with the intention of being rude, but had scarcely entered her presence when he found himself treating her with all the consideration due to a lovely, virtuous, and accomplished woman.

It was a strange thing, but not less strange than

true, that the daring impudence which had rendered so notorious the President of the Hell Fire Club, and had so strongly influenced the Emperor of the Mohocks in his nightly orgies and assaults, completely forsook him when in the presence of the youthful beauty who was so completely in his power. This defect could scarcely be said to be the result of personal attraction, for the young profligate had been too much accustomed to it to be very greatly under its influence. No, it arose from a peculiarity in the manners of the Maid of Honour—an indescribable fascination, mingled with a most graceful modesty, which rendered him too much charmed whilst in her presence to think of his discreditable views.

“Zounds! this will never do!” he exclaimed to a brother profligate as they sat together at their wine, “I shall be laughed at at the Kit Cat, expelled from the Hell Fire, and declared a milk-sop and a saint at every chocolate house between the Temple and St. James’ Street. I must not suffer this Molly Coddle sort of feeling to stand in my way. I have delayed quite long enough, curse me! and it is high time to make sure of my game before I have it snatched out of my hands. Egad, I think I’ll go and tell her at once what she has

to expect. I shall never be in a better humour for coming to the point with her than I now am ; so I'll just take another glass and go at once to her apartments."

" Ah, your Grace is come at last ?" cried the Brigadier's daughter with delighted looks as she hastened to meet him on his entrance into her sitting room. " I must say it's vastly civil of you to come here. But I am delighted to see you, and hope you are disposed to pay me a long visit."

" Surely," thought the Duke to himself, " there must be some mistake here. I thought this was my own house, but I must be confoundedly mistaken, for this rare creature plays the hostess so charmingly, I cannot but be her guest instead of she mine."

The Duke advanced ; notwithstanding his experience in female society, he felt a sensible embarrassment. But he had "screwed his courage to the sticking place ;" and determined to settle the business he had come upon off hand.

" My dearest creature," cried the noble voluptuary, taking her hand and looking into her face with one of his most enamoured glances, " I

really think now 'tis time you should reward me for my strenuous endeavours to obtain your favour. Beauty, like yours, was not created to run to waste like an idle weed:—it is a source of happiness, of which you ought to avail yourself with as little loss of time as possible. Let mine be the rapture you are so well able to dispense. Enriched by your smiles let me be the happiest of men.”

Mary Lepel listened with an air of profound attention, and a lovely smile adorned her beautiful little mouth.

“I protest to you, I do not think that speech ill expressed,” she replied gaily. “Indeed it is exceedingly pretty—worthy to be put in the mouth of any hero. It reminds one prodigiously of the pretty speech made by the Princess Parisatis when with the Princess Statira her sister, Apamia, Arsinoe, Cleone, Ptolomeus, and Eumenes, with many other ladies, she paid a visit to Lysimachus.

“‘If this visit have surprised you, Lysimachus,’ said she, ‘the words I have to say will surprise you more; so that were I not assured by too many trials that Lysimachus hath perfectly loved me, and were not my conscience clear from all

the reproaches he can use, I should never have ventured to make a necessary declaration, and to ask him much greater, and much more difficult proofs of his friendship than all those he has already showed me. In short, Lysimachus, I come to give you the last marks of my affection, and to receive the last testimony of yours. But before I declare what I have done for you, and what I desire of you, be pleased that by the remainder of that empire you have given me over you, I require some assurance, and engage you to grant what I hope for from you, of what nature soever it be.'

"And what does your Grace think," added the Brigadier's daughter, earnestly, "was the declaration the Princess Parisatis had come to make to her lover?"

"Positively I am not competent to say," he replied, already wavering in his resolution from finding himself taking an interest in her lively discourse.

"The Princess came for no other purpose then, than to declare to her lover that she had thought proper to marry Hephestion, which I am not sure was the wisest thing she could do, and to beg that Lysimachus would be satisfied with her friendship

and reconcile himself to the change that had taken place in her condition."

"A deuced unwelcome declaration, I should say," observed the Duke of Wharton; "that is to say, if Lysimachus was half as fervent an adorer of the Princess Parisatis as I am of the matchless Mary Lepel."

"Oh he doated on her!" cried the young Maid of Honour with very pretty enthusiasm, without taking the slightest notice of the conclusion of the Duke's speech. "He adored the ground she walked upon; and was terribly afflicted by the intelligence. Indeed, for some time it took away his senses; for he fell down in a swoon, as is described in the story, without sense or motion. But when he sufficiently recovered from the dreadful shock it must have been to him, poor fellow! he made a most touching speech to her. I remember it well, especially the last sentence, which ran thus: 'I will lay my neck under He- phestion's foot, if you desire it, and with respect and submission will kiss the very hand that murthers me. If you command me I will do more yet; and if for the small remnant of my life I cannot change the nature of my affection, I at least protest to you, that you shall never be trou-

bled with it ; and that neither you nor your husband shall ever have any cause to complain of my words or actions.'

"That was vastly handsome, was it not?" she inquired with a look of intense admiration.

"Upon my life now I think he was prodigious good-natured," replied the young Duke, much more warmly admiring the lovely face before him than the humble speech of the disappointed lover, "I can't say though I think Lysimachus possessed much spirit."

"He was the bravest of the brave," said the Brigadier's daughter, with an earnestness almost solemn. "On one occasion he combatted alone and unarmed with a lion, and vanquished the creature by tearing his tongue out by the roots, and then beating in his skull with his gauntlets."

"Devilish clever of him, I must confess," observed her companion ; "but though after that I must not doubt his courage, I cannot but think he received the news of his mistress being given to another in a monstrous humble sort of way. Now, if you my adored creature had paid me a visit—"

"Oh, your Grace does not see that this is the

effect of all-conquering love," said Mary Lepel, interrupting an amorous declaration.

"Ah to be sure!" exclaimed the Duke; "I ought to have known what powerful effects Love could produce. Since I have loved you—"

"But talking of love, there is a wonderful proof of its powerful effects in the letter written by Prince Oroondates to Queen Statira on an occasion equally trying.

" 'I reproach you with nothing, O Cassandra,' he says; 'but I come to die for you. I will endeavour by my blood to establish your repose; but with that blood I will also engrave in your heart an eternal remorse of your infidelity to me. As much cast off and as much forsaken as I am now; for the last time I will without trouble give that life for you, which you have used to sacrifice to despair. But pardon me, O Statira, if in the service I do you in general, I offend you in particular; and if in the number of your enemies, I comprehend my cruel and pitiless enemy; he shall fall if the Gods favour the justice of my quarrel; but if I be capable of injuring you in his person, I shall be so without doubt to satisfy you in mine; and you shall not have the pleasure

of seeing Oroondates outlive the offence he shall have committed against you.’

“Now I consider that prodigiously noble, generous, and dignified,” added the Brigadier’s daughter; “and your Grace, I am sure, has sufficient appreciation for such nobility of soul to admire it equally with myself.”

The noble profligate found himself obliged to commend the stately sentences of Prince Oroondates; and the young Maid of Honour led him from one instance of such refined sentiment to another—from the inexhaustible store-house of her memory—till he had completely forgotten the bad object with which he had entered her apartment; and after a couple of hours passed in listening to her vivid recollections of romantic gallantry, he allowed himself to be curtseyed out of the room as quietly as if the young lady had been doing the honours of Petersham Manor at a morning call. He had scarcely turned his back when he cursed his folly in permitting a mere girl to exercise such a degree of authority over his passions, and became more determined to take advantage of her being under his roof to effect the infamous purpose for which he had caused her to place herself there.

Mary Lepel had scarcely got rid of her unwelcome visitor, when seeking her chair, and giving herself up to a reverie respecting her father and her home, her fair school-fellows, and their thoughts of what had become of her, she was startled by a curious noise near her head, as she sat by the fire-place. She listened.

"Hist!—hist! Missie!" exclaimed a voice, she thought she had heard before. She looked about. There was no sign of any one being present. There was no place where any one could be concealed.

"Hist!—hist! Missie!" repeated the voice, a little more distinctly.

"Why, surely that must be Pompey!" cried the Brigadier's daughter, rising from her seat in great astonishment at the idea of her black page, whom she had left at Hampton Court, being any where in her neighbourhood.

"Yes, Missie, 'tis Pompey; berry glad he found you at last, Missie!"

"And where, in the name of all that's wonderful, are you, Pompey," she added, in increased amazement.

"Up a chimley, Missie. But don't be afraid for he: Pompey know what him about. Him

sent by John Coachman, and anoder gentleman, to warn Missie she got plenty friends berry near her, who'll soon hab her away. So no more at present. Keep a good heart, Missie : Pompey come again anoder time."

The words had scarcely been spoken, when the young lady heard the same sounds which had at first excited her attention, which she now recognised as proceeding from some one climbing the chimney. It was really most extraordinary. She could scarcely make out what it meant; and who could be the person classed with John Coachman as "the other gentleman," puzzled her exceedingly. It was extremely gratifying to know that she had friends so near, though she must say this was a way of affording intelligence quite new to her. She had read of captive ladies receiving information from their pages; but she did not remember a case in which such a messenger had made his way to his mistress by the chimney.

The Maid of Honour proceeded to the window, which she threw open, in a delightful frame of mind. She gazed upon the beautiful park that opened beneath her; the swelling landscape enriched by the noble trees which spread themselves here and there in picturesque clumps, amongst

which the deer were quietly grazing :—a scene of pastoral beauty that seemed to accord but ill with the vitiated tastes of the proprietor. Thick woods appeared to enclose the domain all round, so that the lovely scene was set in an appropriate frame, and from the place of observation of the fair spectator, was seen in all its exquisite beauty.

Mary Lepel regarded it with a sensible gratification. With all her romantic prepossessions and recollections, she had a taste for the beauties of Nature which could but receive the most genuine pleasure from a scene so fair. As she thought of how little it must be appreciated by the lordly owner, she turned her head away and walked from the window with a mournful feeling that such blindness should exist. She had scarcely made half-a-dozen paces, when she felt something whiz by her head, and fall to the floor. Exceedingly surprised was she to find it was an arrow, with a letter addressed to her affixed to it. It may be believed she lost no time in breaking the seal. The contents were written in a fair hand, and ran thus :—

“Incomparable Creature,

“The most devoted of your slaves, bound to your service by chains more durable than ada-

mant, has become acquainted with your shameful detention, and has determined to set you free, or sacrifice his existence in the attempt. Remain tranquil, and fear nothing. Your friends are near and powerful ; and be assured that to one of them at least, there can be no higher gratification attainable, than you have the power to afford, by allowing him to put an end to your confinement.

“ Your adoring, but unknown,

“ SYLVANUS.”

Nothing could have been more to the taste of the fair and youthful reader than this epistle. She read it again and again in a delightful state of mystery :—that friends were near had already been intimated to her in a most singular manner ; but probably the chief or director of their proceedings, had chosen for himself what must be thought a more satisfactory method of communicating with a captive lady than down a chimney. But who was he ? She asked herself. He could only be “ the other gentleman ” so ambiguously mentioned by her dusky page. Then who could *he* be ? That was a question not so readily answered.

Perhaps it was Philip Dormer. He had al-

ready formed some acquaintance both with John Coachman and Pompey, which would account for his choosing them as associates in an enterprise of this nature. If this conjecture proved true, the young Maid of Honour felt half inclined to forgive that graceful courtier his late desertion of her, for the unprepossessing daughter of the wealthy Duchess of Kendal.

She had scarcely had time to put out of sight the arrow, and its welcome *billet*, when she heard footsteps, and presently Mrs. Kitty made her appearance, somewhat too jauntily dressed for one in her station ; but her's was a pretty face, and a buxom figure, and her smart clothing did not look ill upon her. Mrs. Kitty entered with a joyful face ;—that sort of face the abigail only puts on as the bearer of good news, or receiver of an unexpected gratuity.

“ Oh, my dear honoured lady !” she exclaimed, as she approached with an air half respectful, and half familiar ; “ I have such good news for you !”

“ Have you, Mrs. Kitty ?” inquired the Brigadier's daughter, with as indifferent a manner as she could assume ; for she was not quite disposed to declare the good news she had already obtained.

“Yes, my dear honoured Madam, it is prodigious good news, I assure you!” repeated the waiting-maid; and then going close to her, and in a confidential tone she said:

“Your friends are nearer than you imagine.”

“Indeed, Mrs. Kitty!” Mary Lepel exclaimed, wondering not a little at the woman knowing this.

“Yes, indeed, my dear honoured lady,” said Mrs. Kitty, earnestly. “Positively it is as I say, for I have my reasons for knowing it, having seen and spoken to the gentleman himself:—as noble a gentleman as any in England.”

Mrs. Kitty forgot to say that her only evidence of his nobility consisted in a well-filled purse, which she had done him the honour to accept, on condition that she should favour the escape of Madam Lepel. The person mentioned was of course, Mary Lepel at once determined, “the other gentleman” alluded to by the adventurous Pompey; and the Sylvanus of her recent epistle. He had evidently, she thought, taken considerable pains to insure the success of his plans by obtaining the services of her waiting-maid, and her negro page, in addition to shooting a *billet* through the window. The fair captive took this

employment of three channels of communication to her as threefold evidence of the anxiety of the unknown Sylvanus to effect her rescue.

“And what did he say, Mrs. Kitty?” she eagerly inquired.

“We have arranged it all, honoured Madam,” said the other cheerfully. “I have good reason for believing that the sooner you are out of this house the more safe it will be for you; for I know of old when my Lord brings ladies here, however civil he may be at first like, he will not be satisfied till he’s got rid of them, and that is sure to be done in a way as unpleasant to the poor souls as ever it can be,—the more’s the pity say I. ‘Young Madam can’t get away too soon,’ says I to him, says I, ‘and if I was such a beautiful lady I wouldn’t stay another day in the place for a cart-load of money, says I;’ and says he to me, says he, ‘That’s just my opinion to a T Mrs. Kitty,’ says he, ‘and I’ll go through fire and water to get so lovely a young creature out of this horrid place,’ says he. And says I to him, says I, ‘I’ll help you with all my heart, honoured Sir,’ says I, ‘for it’s a burning shame, so it is, that so many of my sex should come to harm as they does from such shocking doings,’ says I.”

“And so we presently agreed upon a plan that cannot fail of getting you safe out of this good-for-nothing house, and amongst your friends, before my Lord can have the slightest suspicion of your having given him the slip ; notwithstanding he is always mighty sharp in looking after his ladies when first he causes them to be brought here.”

“I never supposed he was so bad a character, though I must own I heard much to his prejudice.”

“I think the Duke is pretty well as bad as bad can be, and I shouldn’t be long in proving it to you ; but he aint the only one of that sort. It may be some excuse for him, because he’s sowing his wild oats, as they call it, though I must say considering the time he’s been sowing ’em, there’ll be a rare crop some of these days. But for such old broken-down scarecrows as pretends to be a thousand times more vicious, as I’ve seen in this house afore now, I don’t know of any punishment bad enough.”

Mrs. Kitty shook her head and looked intensely virtuous ; and her attention having been called back to the subject of the proposed escape, she proceeded to explain in detail all the particulars.

However, we must for the present leave her to arrange her proceedings in conjunction with the fair captive's unknown friend, to make the reader aware of the proceedings going on as busily in another part of the house on her behalf.

"Well, brother Tom," said John Coachman to the Duke's head groom as they drank their wine together in a very snug little room over the stables, "I must say as how you've got into a deuced warm stable here, and plenty of corn in the bin, I'll be bound?"

"Loads," said a stunted bandy-legged fellow in a Welsh wig and flannel jacket, who had evidently been welcoming his near relation with a cordiality that had scarcely left him the use of his senses.

"Content's a blessing," continued the old coachman; "with that a man needn't care whether he's comfortably stalled or sent to grass. You're in clover, that's a sure thing; but the best on us sometimes will kick up his heels at a full sieve of beans as though it was something that went terribly against his stomach. I s'pose the Duke forks out handsome for the stable?"

"Precious," said his brother, who was noted for an extraordinary economy in the use of the parts of speech.

“That’s as it should be. Nothing’s to be done where there’s osses, without liberality to them as looks arter ’em. It’s as good as a cordial ball, or a warm mash, and agrees with every sort of constitution. And I say, Tom, aint the Duke monstrous eager to enter for the maiden stakes, eh?” and here John Coachman put his dexter finger to his nose in an exceedingly peculiar manner.

“I believe yer!” says Tom with a grin that stretched his mouth to its full dimensions.

“Shouldn’t wonder but that he’d sometimes get hold of some filly with all her engagements, and put her into training at once under his own eye.”

“Shouldn’t wonder!” echoed Tom.

“It aint werry unlikely the Duke has such on his hands now?”

“Not werry.” And Tom chuckled as if he knew something very pleasant on that point.

“A little bird told me he’d got the most perfect animal as ever you clapped a saddle on. A rum one the Duke, aint he?”

“Uncommon!”

“I suppose she’s kept pretty snug—a box to herself, rack and manger chock full, well littered down, and carefully groomed by his own hands,

eh? Wonder if that was her stall where I saw the window open as we came round by the garden?"

Tom nodded.

"Well, I must say the Duke's a cool hand with these sort of cattle. He tries them with a break I s'pose, or drives them in single harness. Hopes his axle-tree is sound and his wheels well greased, for I expect one of these days some on 'em will run away with him, and smash the whole concern."

John Coachman helped himself and his brother out of the black bottle, and noticed that Tom's eyes were half closed. "I remember when I drove that old foreign hellcat's lumbering chariot," he resumed after wiping his mouth with the cuff of his sleeve, "after I left the Great Duke, I had a young coach horse as was as restive as a cow at her first milking. He'd kick and rear, and shy, and bolt, and play a hundred aggravating tricks as would have tried the patience of Job, had he been on the box. I was forced to thong him, and punished him severely more than once; but it was monstrous difficult to tame such a desperate high spirit. Howsomever, I did tame him at last, and made him go along as orderly as

any coach-horse as ever trotted before four wheels. And how do you think I did it, Tom?"

The question was asked, but the reply it was soon seen was not likely to be speedily forthcoming; for Tom was in a state that did not admit of the convenient mode of question and answer, as far as he was concerned. John Coachman saw that his eyes were closed and his mouth open; an arrangement of these important features that told him as plain as words could speak that it would be entirely useless repeating his query, and consequently continuing his anecdote of the King's mistress's coach-horse. A deep guttural sound, something resembling the low croaking of an ill-tuned organ pipe, still more strongly assured him, and listening a moment to make certain all was right, the old serving man blew the candles out, cautiously pulled up a trap door in the floor, and in a moment had disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ELOPEMENT IN THE DARK.

In all my soul there's not one place
To let a rival enter :
Since she excels in every grace,
In her my love shall centre.

ALLAN RAMSAY.

THE young Maid of Honour thought long and deeply of the unknown Sylvanus who had so seasonably come to her rescue, and entertained herself by fancying several interesting points of resemblance between him and certain celebrated personages whose acquaintance she had formed in some favourite work. By taking some particular quality from one, and some other from another, till she had gone through a pretty extensive list, she managed to create for herself as perfect an admirable Crichton as it was possible even for so very romantic a young lady to imagine. In the

catalogue, very prominently stood youth and beauty, valour, learning, grace, courtesy, strength, honour and modesty; in short, she settled it, that the illustrious unknown must be without a fault, and possess as many virtues as would have sufficed for all the saints in the calendar.

According to Mrs. Kitty's report, the time for her escape was midnight, or as soon after as it could be ascertained that the inmates of the mansion were in their beds, and likely to be asleep; and she had received confirmation of this in a short billet forwarded to her in the same manner as its predecessor, which, in similar agreeable language, requested her to prepare for flight, as an attempt to effect her liberation, which there could be no doubt would be successful, would be made that evening. This letter was full of exaggerated expressions of gallantry, and was also signed Sylvanus.

The intervening hours passed by in a very agreeable reverie, till it came into her head that it would be proper—indeed there was more than one precedent for it—to take leave of her host; and as it was impossible she could do this in person, she sat down, and wrote the following letter, after a model she had in her retentive memory,

left by an incomparable Princess when placed in a position singularly like her own.

“My Lord Duke,

“I thank you for the entertainment you have afforded me while you did me the favour of detaining me under your roof—a favour which should receive the more consideration, from my visit being without the ceremony of an invitation on your part, and totally wanting inclination on mine. I regret that the efforts made by your Grace to render yourself agreeable to me during this compulsory association has been attended with so little success; but your Grace, I have no doubt, will find consolation in remembering that you have been preceded by kings, princes, and other illustrious personages, who, under similar circumstances, met with a like disappointment.

“Should your Grace feel any desire to be more successful in your gallantries, I should recommend you to apply yourself diligently to the study of those noble qualities which women are the most sure to appreciate:—a model every way worthy of your following, your Grace will find in the character of Prince Oroondates, in the work of which you have so often heard me speak.

“And with best wishes for your equalling that illustrious Prince, I have the honour to subscribe myself, my Lord Duke, your Grace’s most obedient and very humble servant,

“MARY LEPEL.”

“Maid of Honour to her Royal Highness
Caroline, Princess of Wales.”

It may perhaps seem strange to the reader, that the Brigadier’s daughter did not more strongly express her indignation at the Duke of Wharton’s unprincipled pursuit of her; but we must beg, in the first place, to remind him that at the period we are attempting to illustrate, the stratagem by which that nobleman had gained possession of her person, and the object he had in view, were far from being thought so heinous as they would be at the present day; and in the next place we must beg him to recollect, that our heroine was none of your outrageously virtuous damsels who think it necessary to raise an earthquake around them at the slightest intimation of an improper passion; instead of this she took everything with a quiet dignity, that no extent of provocation seemed capable of diminishing. She evidently could not humble herself by thinking

that any degradation was intended her; and possibly could find, in the young Duke's proceedings, nothing more venal than the efforts of an ardent lover to recommend himself to an intractable mistress.

Scarcely had the fair captive sealed her letter, when she heard Mrs. Kitty's cautious approach. It was late in the evening, and a profound silence appeared to reign throughout the house, broken, however, now and then by snatches of singing and bursts of laughter. The Maid of Honour had attired herself in the picturesque hunting habit in which she had arrived, and was fully equipped for immediate flight. Although in general so calm and passionless, when she thought how soon she might be far removed from these walls, and of the mysterious Sylvanus to whom she was going to owe her liberty, she could not avoid feeling unusual excitement.

Mrs. Kitty came in with intelligence that increased rather than diminished it. She said that the Duke was entertaining a party of his profligate companions, and that he had been heard to intimate his intention of paying his fair prisoner a visit that night, which, in the state he was then in, boded the young lady no good.

Such a visit was felt to be extremely inconvenient; it might not only prevent her proposed escape, it might be attended with the very consequences that escape was intended to avoid. It was to be hoped that he would delay his threatened visit till she had time to place herself in safety. In this hope, though not without feeling considerable apprehension, the Brigadier's daughter awaited the signal that was to declare to her, her unknown adorer was in waiting beneath her window.

Mrs. Kitty had gone out again to reconnoitre, and it was arranged that she should give immediate notice of any movement in the dining-room. The swelling notes of some convivial chorus could still occasionally be heard, and the Maid of Honour listened to them with the most fervent prayers that the revellers might not feel inclined to discontinue their enjoyment. She felt that she was getting more anxious every half hour. Indeed her position, experienced as she had become in adventures, she could not help considering as extremely critical. The near prospect of escape, the coming introduction to a most interesting admirer, and the approaching visit of a drunken profligate, were enough to try the nerves

of the most perfect heroine that had ever afforded materials for a ten-volumed romance.

“Ah !” thought she, “little do my most faithful schoolfellows imagine to what inconceivable perils I am exposed ; and never in my most sanguine moments at Minerva House did I dream of being placed in such a delightful state of perplexity.”

The hours crept on with that extraordinary slowness which seems invariably to mark the time that tries our patience. The last half hour lingered with the creeping pace of a schoolboy going up to punishment. It looked as if midnight never would come. At last, however, its almost immediate arrival could no longer be doubted.

Mary Lepel’s only dread now seemed to be the possibility of Sylvanus forgetting his appointment ; but the conviction that such important appointments never were forgotten, greatly assured her. Presently Mrs. Kitty crept in as noiselessly as a cat, and without saying a word as quietly as possible proceeded to the door. She appeared to have brought a large bundle in her apron, which, on unfolding, proved to be a ladder of ropes.

“My dear honoured Madam, you haven’t a

moment to lose," she whispered in an extremely mysterious manner, "the Duke is bent on coming here, that's for certain, and he's in that state in which he is dangerous to man or woman. If his noisy companions could but detain him another half hour all would be well; but of this my dear honoured Madam, I'm sorry to say I have my doubts."

"Dear now, how very annoying!" exclaimed Mary Lepel.

Mrs. Kitty did not venture to say much more. She had received a most handsome bribe, and to her honour be it spoken she seemed determined to do her best to earn it. She was busily securing the top of the rope ladder, so as to make a descent both easy and secure. The window was now cautiously opened, and she leaned her head out for a moment; a low whistle satisfied her her employer was in waiting, though the night was so pitch dark, she could discern no more than the outline of a man on the lawn beneath.

"Now my dear honoured Madam," she whispered to her companion, "you must get on this chair, and thence step out of the window on to the steps of the ladder, and I will support you as you descend as far as I can reach. Then you

must hold on firmly by the cross ropes till you get to the bottom, where you will find further assistance."

"Thank you, Mrs. Kitty, I dare say I shall manage very well; but here take this purse, it is but a small return for such eminent services."

"I'm sure, my dear honoured Madam, your kindness will never be forgotten," exclaimed the waiting woman, as she quickly placed the handsome gratuity in her bosom. "It is no time for words, or I would express my sense of your goodness; but hush! yes, as sure as chickens come out of egg shells, here comes the Duke."

Mary Lepel was on the point of springing upon the chair, and following the directions so clearly given her, when she seemed suddenly transfixed by the unwelcome announcement she had just heard. The two females looked at one another for a moment in undisguised alarm. They heard a man's stride coming towards the door, and with it came the burthen of a song that had been a favourite in the licentious days of the Merry Monarch. There was an irregularity in these approaching foot-steps, as if the person by whom they were made was occasionally assisted by the support of the wall, and the voice moreover was

husky and broken by hiccups. There could be little doubt that the wine he had imbibed had affected both his step and his voice; but there could be no doubt it was the dreaded Duke, and before either Mrs. Kitty or Mary Lepel had recovered from her consternation, he had reached the door.

“Open my adorable (hiccup) angel upon earth!” he exclaimed, knocking loudly at the panel. “Open to an adoring (hiccup) worshipper, (hiccup) who loves you to distraction (hiccup) who can’t live a moment longer without you; (hiccup) open to these longing (hiccup) arms, (hiccup) and bless the most faithful, (hiccup) the most faithful, (hiccup) the most faithful of men.”

The two females looked at each other again; Mrs. Kitty much the most alarmed. Presently Mary Lepel made a movement towards the door.

“You’re lost if you let him in!” whispered Mrs. Kitty. Nevertheless, greatly both to her astonishment and indignation, her companion proceeded towards the door.

“Hasten my charmer! (hiccup)” cried the Duke, fumbling at the door handle.

"Who's there at this untimely hour?" she exclaimed.

"'Tis I, (hiccup) the Duke of Wharton, (hiccup) the most faithful of men, (hiccup)" he replied.

"I am not quite ready to receive your Grace," answered the young Maid of Honour, with a degree of unconcern that amazed her companion, "this visit being an unexpected pleasure. I therefore must request your Grace will do me the honour to wait half an hour, and then I can promise myself the gratification the Duke of Wharton has been so good as to intend me."

"Oh, no ceremony! (hiccup)" cried the Duke eagerly, "no ceremony I beg, (hiccup) but for such an angel, (hiccup) I'd wait an age, (hiccup). So to please you, my queen of beauty! I'll stay, (hiccup) till you open the door, (hiccup)." Just as he had uttered these words, the gentleman made a lurch, and came against the panels with a shock, that extremely startled both Mary Lepel and Mrs. Kitty.

"Be quick, I implore you!" whispered the frightened waiting-maid, "and I must accompany you, at least in your descent, for if my lord finds me here, and suspects me of having aided your

escape, he would think no punishment severe enough for me."

In another minute, the Maid of Honour was outside the window cautiously descending the rope ladder. She could hear the lover she was so impatient to leave endeavouring to resume the amatory ballad with which he had approached her door, and she could also hear the whispered encouragements of the lover she was equally impatient to meet, as he steadied the ladder to facilitate her descent.

The night was so intensely dark that it was impossible for either to discern a feature of the other. This was rather an annoyance to the Brigadier's daughter, who was extremely impatient to see her very sanguine anticipations respecting her mysterious admirer realised.

"Sylvanus?" she said in an inquiring tone as soon as she found herself on the firm ground with her hand warmly pressed in that of a gentleman.

"Sylvanus," repeated he in a whisper; then added rapidly: "not a word, I implore you—silence and speed can alone make your escape secure."

Mary Lepel said no more; but allowed herself to be conducted—without waiting to see if Mrs.

Kitty was following—with quick but noiseless steps down a long avenue of noble old trees which she knew led to the park gates. The latter they ascertained were conveniently open ; and in the road, after they had turned down to the right about a hundred yards, they came upon a chariot, and in a very few minutes the Brigadier's daughter found herself going along that road as fast as four horses could take her.

The clever way in which she had managed to effect her escape afforded some extremely agreeable reflections ; but her satisfaction was not a little lessened by the dense darkness in which she sat, which prevented her identifying the unknown Sylvanus with the agreeable Beau Ideal she had formed in her own mind. The silence too he had enjoined still continued ; which as he had not broken, she could not think of doing so. She should certainly have preferred some instructive conversation ; but as her lover, perhaps for some excellent reason, did not address her, she did not venture to say anything.

The Brigadier's daughter, however, could not help feeling there was something very singular in the fact of her being whirled along in the depth of midnight in a chariot with a person of whom

she knew nothing, and who seemed determined that she should know nothing—at least from himself. She could scarcely reconcile herself to a mute Sylvanus; for among the qualities with which she had so bountifully gifted him, silence was certainly not one. She had never heard of an instance of a lover running away with a lady and maintaining the most rigid controul over his tongue. She was sure Prince Oroondates would never have been so unentertaining.

In these considerations some time was passed, and also some ground, without the young lady coming to the resolution of breaking the silence that had become so irksome to her. On a sudden she discovered it was being broken, but in a manner for which she was so perfectly unprepared, she at first was inclined to doubt the evidence of her senses. She was conscious of a very ambiguous noise which could proceed only from her companion. She listened most attentively—it could be no mistake—*Sylvanus snored!*

He had evidently been exhausted by his previous exertions; and on entering the vehicle and throwing himself back in the seat, the sense of fatigue so completely got possession of him, that from a state of deep silence, he fell into a state of

deep sleep; and to the astonishment of his mistress, elicited sounds, of whose origin and character there could be no mistake.

Here was something unparaelled for its singularity. In all her extensive reading, the Brigadier's daughter had never met with an instance of a lover in the presence of his mistress being betrayed into so unmistakeable an acknowledgment of inattention. As for such an awful solecism in gallantry being displayed by an admirer immediately upon his finding himself in a lady's society, which he had obtained too by running away with her, it was something so totally out of the question, no one could think of it for a moment.

Could she imagine such a proceeding on the part of the illustrious Bassa or of the Grand Cyrus, or less likely of all, of the incomparable Prince Oroondates! No, it was an offence they would, she was certain, have lost their lives rather than have committed. The discovery created in her mind some thoughts of an unsatisfactory nature. Her opinion of Sylvanus had received a severe shock. Even had he possessed all the perfections she had bestowed upon him, his being guilty of so shocking a breach of good manners

must in some measure neutralise them. She did not wish to seem prejudiced ; but she could not help coming to the conclusion that a person who could make so disagreeable a noise when left for the first time *tête-à-tête* with a lady, must be very far indeed from what she had thought him.

Sylvanus remained in happy ignorance of the unfavourable conclusions of his fair companion. Every minute his snoring became louder and louder, till the Brigadier's daughter felt a strong desire to put an end to the disturbance by rousing the sleeper ; but she doubted the propriety of a young lady bred in the strict rules of Minerva House, rudely shaking a stranger ; and not remembering any precedent which she could follow—to the best of her belief no heroine having been so unpleasantly circumstanced before ;—she felt herself compelled to endure the infliction as well as she could.

To her great gratification, this strange, this incomprehensible conduct on the part of her unknown adorer, met with a sudden check that put an end to it most completely. The vehicle stopped, and the snorer awoke. They had come to a turnpike, which was found to be fastened in such a manner the men could not open it. Mary

Lepel heard some one come to the coach door and commence acquainting her companion with the cause of the delay, and heard him express his impatience by several expletives more emphatic than elegant.

In this state of the case a gleam of light was thrown into the chariot from a lantern, and the Maid of Honour caught a momentary glimpse of her companion's features. Never had she experienced such a shock—not even when she discovered the hero of her first adventure in her father's footman. The admirable Crichton of her imagination disappeared in a moment with all the host of perfections with which she had gifted him; for she could plainly discern in the place of the handsome Sylvanus of her thoughts—the expected *fac simile* of the fascinating Prince Oroondates—the wrinkled visage of an old man; and another glimpse was sufficient to identify in that dark, haughty, and somewhat forbidding countenance, the well-known features of the Duke of Somerset.

It is possible, notwithstanding the quiet manner in which she was wont to meet extraordinary surprises, that the Brigadier's daughter might have expressed her astonishment at this unwel-

come change in some of the forms used by her sex generally, and made and provided for such occasions, had not other incidents occurred in rapid succession which left her no time to have recourse to them. Scarcely had she made the discovery just mentioned, when she became aware that a scuffle was going on close by the chariot. Simultaneously the coachman was dragged from his box and the postillion from his seat. At one coach-door two athletic arms dragged out the trembling old Duke into the road, as the other opened and some one jumped in and took his place. It appeared then as if a different coachman and postillion had been provided, for in another moment the carriage passed through the turnpike at a rapid pace.

“Nicked him by Jupiter!” exclaimed her new companion as he gave way to a chuckle of intense satisfaction. “Knew he must come here, and laid my plans to seize the prize from him just when he thought he was most secure of it.”

Poor Mary Lepel! She had only escaped from the old Duke of Somerset to fall into the power of an individual equally disagreeable to her in the person of the old Duke of Buckingham. It was difficult to say which misfortune was the least desirable, and the young beauty at first knew not

whether to mourn or rejoice at the change. Nevertheless, she did not think it necessary to express either astonishment or chagrin, but quietly allowed her companion to give utterance to his enjoyment at having outwitted his rival.

“May I ask your Grace where you are conveying me?” inquired the Brigadier’s daughter in the same tone and manner she would have given to any ordinary question.

“Conveying you, my charmer!” rapturously exclaimed her companion, “where but to a home that you will make a paradise.”

“That’s vastly obliging of you, I must say,” she replied, “I look forward with singular gratification to the prospect you are so good as to hold out to me of her Grace’s society.”

“No no, my angel, the Duchess shall not trouble us I promise you,” hastily answered the Duke not at all relishing the idea of his wife becoming aware of his present proceedings; “the old lady is at Buckingham House, and there likely to remain. But I have secured a snug place for you not many miles from here, where with so fascinating an associate I mean to be as happy as mortal man can be.”

“Your Grace is pleased to be facetious. I am

not at all likely to minister to your happiness. I protest to you I regret this extremely; but as you did not inform me of your obliging design, I could not acquaint you with my inability to fulfil your wishes."

"You don't know what you can do till you try, my adorable little Venus. I am not so monstrous difficult to please with so very pretty a creature before me. You can but do your best, and you will find me disposed to make every allowance in your favour. I am so devilish delighted at having disappointed that unconscionable old prig Somerset, that you will find me pleased with your slightest endeavours to exercise your remarkable beauty in rewarding my long and ardent attachment."

"Your Grace is mighty civil," observed the young lady; "I am truly sensible of the honour you have done me by your preference, but you must pardon me for saying I am not aware of any instance of a female in my position living with that respectability which is so desirable we should all possess, while accepting the attentions of a nobleman of your Grace's rank, blessed already with an affectionate partner. Clelia would certainly not have allowed such attentions, and Cas-

sandra would no doubt have been offended at such being paid to her."

What influence the example of these illustrious heroines might have had on her venerable lover, it is not now easy to say with any certainty, for before he could reply, one of the Duke's attendants rode up to the carriage door.

"May I never do an ill turn my Lord, if we are not pursued !" cried a well known voice.

His Grace listened, and assuredly the sound of advancing horsemen and of some kind of vehicle might be distinctly heard coming along the road at a tremendous pace. The Duke immediately took the alarm.

"A hundred pounds my fine fellows !" he cried as he put his head out of the window, "a hundred pounds if you succeed in leaving these rascals behind. Spare neither whip nor spur ; put the horses to their full speed."

A prospect of escape again dawned upon the bewildered Brigadier's daughter ; but it was one in which she could find no consolation. She doubted not that the Duke of Wharton had discovered her escape, and was pursuing her as fast as his best horses could carry him. To fall again into his hands, especially in the state in which

she had left him, with all his worst passions excited by her flight, was dreadful. She could almost in preference reconcile herself to remain with the Duke of Buckingham, and take the chance of getting away from him the first favourable opportunity.

The sounds of pursuit were now heard more distinctly, accompanied with loud shouts and cries, notwithstanding the increased speed at which they were going; and her companion was becoming extremely excited and uneasy; now listening, now shouting encouragingly to his men, and now uttering violent execrations at the little progress they seemed to be making, though they were proceeding at a pace which even in broad daylight would have been pronounced hazardous, but in the pitchy darkness in which everything was surrounded, it was attended with imminent danger.

“Fifty guineas a piece my fine fellows!” bawled out the Duke, as the sounds of pursuit came down the wind too distinctly not to excite unpleasant apprehensions, “fifty guineas a man if you distance these fellows. Fly like the wind! lash—spur away! Make those cursed beasts put their lazy hoofs to the ground a little faster.”

At this time the carriage was going at a break-neck pace. The public roads were then very different from the smooth macadamised highways they are now, as they were usually extremely uneven, and broken by deep ruts and hollows which would have severely tried the springs of the best vehicle ever turned out of Long Acre. Consequently the Brigadier's daughter was bounced about in her seat in the most disagreeable manner; and the ill-constructed vehicle creaked and strained as if every minute it was about being shaken to pieces by the rude shocks it received. Nevertheless, the horses went tearing on, and the rude vehicle went tearing after them, up hill and down hill, into ruts and out of hollows, and swinging from one side to the other in a style that might have alarmed less timid riders than the two persons thus strangely placed in it.

“Dash on and be hanged to you, or these rascals will catch us !” shouted the Duke louder than ever. “A hundred pounds a man if we escape them.”

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth, when *dash, crash, smash* went the chariot, and over went the wheels, throwing the Duke rather heavily, and Mary Lepel with sufficient force to cause a total deprivation of consciousness.

On her recovery nothing could exceed her satisfaction on recognising the voices of John Coachman and Pompey, who, with a stranger, were carefully lifting her out of the broken carriage.

“Wo ho, gently there !” cried the old man as though he were superintending the grooming of a restive horse. “Ease her head a little, Pompey. Wo ho there—gently does it.”

“Ah, poor Missie !” sighed Pompey, his broad grin having completely left him, and his ebony countenance assuming an aspect of great distress. “Sorry for she. Missie berry good to Pompey. Hope she hab no hurt !”

“Let us carry her to our carriage,” said a third voice. “We can place her more at her ease there.”

“To be sure we can,” exclaimed John Coachman, “and ease she shall have in the turning of a corner. So bear a hand, Pompey. Gently, wo ho ! Now we have her. Give her her head, Pompey ! Pull up ! All right !”

Mary Lepel found herself recovering rapidly when placed on the seat of the new chariot which she soon discovered was her father’s, and having thanked her preservers she made them lose no time in conveying her to Petersham Manor. But

it was not till the carriage had proceeded some distance that she was aware a gentleman shared the vehicle with her.

The stranger apologised very gracefully for the liberty he had taken, but excused himself on the score of the danger to be incurred on the road had the young lady been left to ride home alone. His voice was extremely melodious, and his language singularly refined and well chosen. The Brigadier's daughter soon forgave the involuntary offence, and in a very short time found herself engaged in an animated conversation with him.

In a few minutes, to her astonishment, she ascertained that her agreeable companion was the genuine Sylvanus whose scheme for her rescue had very nearly been defeated by the crafty interposition of the two old Dukes. She of course felt infinitely obliged to him for the exertions he had made in getting her away from the three graceless Graces. She liked his voice extremely, and would have given worlds to have beheld his face ; but for that privilege it was imperative she should wait.

The stranger spoke of many things ; and always spoke well. She spoke also, for she was in excellent spirits ; and did not wish to appear to disadvan-

tage to so entertaining a companion. Of course she was not long before she led the conversation towards her favourite course of reading; but nothing could exceed her surprise and delight, when she found her companion was familiar with all the best examples of romantic fiction, both in France and England. He had all De Scuderi by heart; he seemed equally intimate with the *chef-d'œuvres* of Marivaux and Crebillon, of Monsieur de van Morière, and the Comtesse d'Aunoy; and his memory was similarly well stored with the productions of Aphara Behn, and other English romance writers.

Never did time pass so pleasantly as when speeding along her road homewards, our enraptured heroine heard all her favourites discussed by a critic whose tastes were so singularly consonant with her own. One after another they were brought in review:—Hypolite Comte de Duglas, *Le Voyage de l'Isle d'Amour*, *Les Amours d'Aristandre et de Cleonice*, *l'Illustre Bassa*, *Le Grand Cyrus*, *Polexander*, *Cleopatra*, *Clelia*, *Cassandra*, and many others; and they were dilated on in a manner that showed how much the speaker delighted in their several beauties.

Then came delightful references to her favou-

rite characters and passages; and it was most extraordinary that the stranger should express himself so very favourably always on the personages and incidents that had most excited her admiration. She could not herself have been more enthusiastic about Ibrahim, Cyrus, Prince Oroondates, and various other incomparable heroes who had so long obtained her esteem; and at every fresh reference she found her admiration of the stranger increase, till she could hardly restrain her satisfaction within reasonable bounds.

The hours passed by rapidly in this extremely entertaining manner; and having changed horses more than once, of which she was scarcely conscious, so intent was she on the entertainment afforded by her companion, she was now within a few miles of her own home. How earnestly did she long for daylight. She had never before met any one half so entertaining; and her curiosity was extreme to find out what sort of person it was who had made her pass the preceding hours with such extraordinary gratification.

Mary Lepel had already been terribly deceived by her imagination; nevertheless she could not avoid hazarding some conjectures. The musical voice;—the animated delivery;—the quick in-

telleet;—the fine discrimination; the retentive memory:—these qualities surely could not accompany a disagreeable form, and repulsive features;—they could not exist with age and ill-looks. As she approached home, she became more intensely excited on this subject, for it appeared possible the stranger might take his departure without her having so much as an opportunity of glancing at his features.

Fortunately for the young Maid of Honour, as she drove into Petersham, day broke, and in the delightful stranger, she was enabled to recognise the very last person in her imagination she could have supposed likely to put himself to so much trouble to render himself agreeable to her. As soon as the light made objects distinguishable, she beheld before her the effeminate features and elegant figure of “Handsome Hervey.”

CHAPTER IX.

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE AND THE DUKE OF
WHARTON.

Once more I write to you, as I promised, and this once I fear will be the last. The curtain will soon be drawn between my friend and me; and nothing left but to wish you a long good night.

POPE TO BISHOP ATTERBURY IN THE TOWER.

CHELSEA, now obliged to give way as a fashionable locality, to its upstart neighbours Brompton and Pimlico, enjoyed during the first quarter of the last century, about the highest reputation of any of the suburban villages. It contained several places of popular resort, and various attractions for genteel visitors. Many persons of celebrity resided here: sometimes for a season only, as

now-a-days people visit distant watering-places; whilst others possessed handsome villas, which they occupied as a settled residence. Indeed it had become at one time quite a village of palaces.

But the Chelsea of 1720, and the Chelsea of 1845, are two very different places. The pleasant promenades are lost under an endless maze of bricks and mortar; the palaces are gone, or the few of which any vestiges exist are so metamorphosed, as scarcely to be identified; the green fields, the shady lanes, the fine avenues, the beautiful gardens—have all disappeared. The World's End is no longer to be found; Jenny's Whim is an ordinary public-house; the Bun-House a common brick building; the Ferry has become a landing-place for steamers; and, save the old church near the river, the Botanic Garden, and a few other surviving vestiges of the old time known only to the antiquary, nothing exists by which the fashionable visitor of the last century would be able to recognise his old quarters.

Among the occasional residents of Chelsea, at the period we are illustrating, was the Prime Minister. Sir Robert Walpole occupied a large house, in which he received his clients, entertained

his friends, and endeavoured to cultivate a taste for the Fine Arts, and other luxurious enjoyments for which his vicinity to the metropolis afforded him better opportunities than he possessed at his family seat at Houghton.

If the Minister chose to live at Chelsea with any hope of escaping the fawning crowd who jostled him at his *levées* in town, he soon found this was fallacious :—he had too much patronage ; —he was too influential ;—he was too important to be abandoned because he retired to the distance of a few miles. Many were the pilgrims who thronged to this political shrine ; and various were the objects they sought in their attentions to the great man.

Walpole assumed to be a man of taste, and, in a moderate way, a patron of learning, which of course brought him in frequent juxta-position with the artists, scholars, and wits of the age ; but in reality his literary capacity was extremely limited, and his affection for men of letters anything but cordial. However, his exalted position, and one or two instances of considerateness brought many needy writers to his ante-rooms ; and more than one author, whom Jacob Tonson would have placed on his right hand, was con-

tent to wait his turn of audience with trafficking *virtuosi*, needy political dependents, and eager place-hunters, who had sought him out in his Chelsea retirement, with sanguine hopes of advancing their interests.

Sir Robert was in a small room fitted up as a study. His features still preserved something of the handsome character which had distinguished them in early life; but the ordinary expression was good humour:—an expression, however, now clouded by an air of uneasiness and embarrassment. His figure betrayed a disposition to corpulency; but not sufficiently so to take from his courtly and prepossessing appearance. He was handsomely, yet not showily dressed, in the costume of an English gentleman of the time, with ruffles, sword, and wig, and was listening attentively to a young man who sat at a table furnished with writing materials, and a vast collection of papers, as the statesman walked backwards and forwards apparently dictating to him; sometimes stopping to look at a picture left upon a chair, or some object of *vertu* placed upon one of the tables.

The Minister knew of the existence of many things that troubled his government. The South

Sea Bubble had burst, and had raised a storm of indignation throughout the country from the defrauded dupes, which had fallen heavily on the head of Sir John Blunt, and threatened his patrons with a downfall as complete as his own. Hardly had the government recovered from this shock, when a violent attack was directed against it, by the opposition taking up the cause of the Bishop of Rochester, whose imprisonment in the Tower was represented as having being unnecessarily prolonged and severe.

It was a trial of strength between the two great parties in the State as to whether the Bishop should be liberated as a martyr, or punished as a traitor. A Bill of Pains and Penalties had passed the Commons, and was being debated in the House of Lords. The ability with which the Prelate defended himself, and the clamour which his friends raised about his infamous treatment, created such a ferment in the public mind against the Minister, who was looked upon as his chief prosecutor, that he was warned his life was in danger.

The fears of assassination, however, troubled Walpole but little: he thought only of the formidable stand his political opponents were making

against the punishment of the Bishop—a measure to which the government stood pledged; and his cares concerned only the manner in which the trial might be affected by the manœuvres of the opposition.

While these considerations were passing in his mind, a confidential servant entered and announced the Duke of Wharton. Sir Robert paused in his walk. His features assumed a thoughtful expression, which presently gave way to a smile. The young Duke, wild and reckless as he was, possessed talents which, had he given them fair play, might have rendered his Grace an ornament instead of a discredit to his country. The Minister could not count on his support, but much desired it, and believed his example would influence many other peers. He saw at once the value of conciliating such a personage.

“Where is he, Stephen?” he inquired.

“In the ante-room, Sir Robert,” he replied.

“Bring him here, and dismiss every one else: I shall not be visible. Decanter some of my choicest wine, and bring it in as soon as possible; and be sure I am not disturbed by any one.”

Sir Robert having desired his secretary to take

his papers into another room, awaited the appearance of his visitor. A few moments, and the young profligate entered the room. He had evidently only half recovered from the debauch of the previous night. His eyes looked heavy and his cheeks sallow; his ruffles were soiled, and his dress negligent and disordered.

Nothing could be more cordial than his reception by the Minister. Sir Robert's mellow voice assumed the most affectionate tone—his grasp of the hand seemed to tell of a friendship as durable as the Pyramids. Nevertheless, strange to relate, the Duke did not seem so pleased as his friend wished. He certainly hailed Sir Robert in quite as friendly a manner, and was as cordial in his shake; but he looked ashamed and downcast—an extraordinary expression for the bold, unblushing features of the noble scapegrace.

The wine was brought in, and presently the Duke of Wharton and Sir Robert sat themselves down to enjoy it, and a little friendly conversation. Walpole's quick eye saw that his companion had something to communicate, but laboured under so much embarrassment, as to prevent his entering upon it.

Few persons could play the host with more

grace than the Minister, and he was now fully disposed to make himself agreeable. He pressed the wine, indulged in a joke or two at his friend's peccadilloes, and with his hearty laugh and extremely cordial manner he would have thawed the reserve of a much more modest person than his youthful guest. The influence of the wine and his host's friendliness at last appeared to have their proper effect; and his Grace seemed to make a sudden effort to break out of the barrier of common-place in which he had been expressing himself.

“Zounds!” said he, “it may as well out. I’m deucedly hipped or I should have told you at once what I wanted. The fact is I am tired of the sort of life I have been leading. It seems to me I have been running a course of wanton folly, and having awoke to a full consciousness of the worthlessness of my pursuits, I have come to the conviction it would be better to turn over a new leaf whilst there is time. Now the thing I want is to have some respectable pursuit that may serve to occupy my leisure, and prevent me again having recourse to those excesses which I see are so degrading. Egad, now, Walpole, I think I might get on pretty well with politics, and I have there-

fore come to you, as to an old friend, to put me into the right road."

The Minister had listened very intently to the whole of this most welcome confession, restraining himself from expressing his gratification, by a fear of losing any part of a communication so interesting.

The Duke looked the very picture of remorse:—he seemed quite alive to the madness of his past life, and anxious to retrieve his errors by every attainable means.

His companion was delighted; Sir Robert caught up his hand, and shook it most cordially, congratulating him on a change that spoke so eloquently of the goodness of his heart and the soundness of his intellect. He professed to be charmed with such ingenuousness, and protested he would readily have gone a hundred miles to have been a witness to a change in his young friend that did him so much honour. Then launching out into a string of patriotic commonplaces, he most urgently advised the penitent nobleman to direct the talents with which he was so largely gifted into the noble channel of legislation, holding out a prospect to him of the highest distinction in the power of the Crown, if he would

steadily support the views of his Majesty's government.

"Oh, as to that, Walpole, there can be no question," he replied. "By the way, this is devilish good wine; I wish I had had some of it last night instead of the confounded stuff I was obliged to drink at the Club."

"I am glad you like it; it is considered extremely choice, and I only produce it when I can enjoy it with a congenial friend. You must allow me to send you a few dozen to your place at Twickenham. Nay, I will take no denial. Not a bottle of it can be procured elsewhere, and you are too perfect a connoisseur not to be able to enjoy it thoroughly. Come, don't spare it."

"Curse me if it hasn't the most delicate flavour I ever met with. Well, if I consent to rob you of any of this matchless beverage you must come to my place and help me to drink it. We'll have a bout like that by which I immortalised 'the Luck of Edenhall.'"

"Agreed. But such things must not be too frequent, if you desire to maintain a reputation as a steady supporter of government!"

"Egad, Walpole, you are right again. I have had, to be sure, rather more than enough of such

things ; but, in good time, doubt not seeing me as steady at the political game as the staunchest old pointer that ever put his keen nose into stubble. The thing is, I am deucedly behind hand in my political education. I hope I may be allowed to profit by your experience ; but I ought, with the principles I intend to advocate, to be well acquainted with government measures. There are many things I cannot see my way in, and I must own I should like to know what I am about when standing up in the House of Lords in the character of a supporter of government. For example, and one is as good as a thousand, there is the case of Bishop Atterbury that excites such vast attention. Every one just now is full of him ; for there is such a devil of a coil raised as could scarcely have been exceeded if the King had forced the whole of the Reverend Bench to dance Sir Roger de Coverley for his amusement in the middle of the Mall. Now as the trial of the Bishop is a good occasion for displaying one's self, I want to know what you intend doing, that I may give you as much assistance as possible."

This question was not less agreeable than the previous intimation ; and the Minister was quite delighted at the opening it gave him for leading

the young Duke to strengthen the government at the approaching contest. He filled the glasses, then commenced a masterly detail of the state of his case against the prelate; and then, perfectly satisfied from his manner his companion was to be depended on, he one after another showed him the strong points he intended bringing forward, and the arguments he should raise upon them.

This extremely confidential interview lasted some short time longer, the Duke of Wharton continually expressing his regret for his excesses, and his intense desire at once to prove both his loyalty and his capacity for public business; and Sir Robert Walpole assuring him, with the most impressive cordiality of manner, that his past errors would be both forgiven and forgotten, and that he entertained the most sanguine hopes that in some incredible short time, his young friend would astonish the world with his talents as a statesman and a legislator.

Never was there so good an understanding between any two persons as there appeared between the Minister and his valuable new adherent; and every additional bumper seemed the more strongly to cement their friendship. A

great change had already taken place. The down-cast look, the shame-faced expression of the repentant profligate had disappeared, and his features were beaming with satisfaction and self-content. As for Sir Robert, his countenance seemed to glow with benevolence, as the rising sun with brilliancy. His Grace would be a vast acquisition to his party, and might render them essential service at a critical period. He thanked, and flattered, and promised as only a Minister can, and strove all he could to entertain and amuse his guest. Indeed, no fond father could appear more attached to a favourite son.

As for the young Duke, he seemed to have regained his spirits under the delightful influence of the statesman's cordiality, and entertained his host with numberless stories and anecdotes of the ladies of his acquaintance. Sir Robert contributed his share of anecdotes, nor did he altogether avoid supplying a fair share of scandal, in accordance with the taste of the time.

"So I hear Molly Bellenden has eloped with Argyle," said the Duke. "Now from what I saw, I thought the Prince had a claim upon the lady he was not likely to forego. How was the affair managed?"

“Egad, everybody knew or pretended to know everything respecting this business. The step has been famously canvassed, I can assure you; and the non success of the Prince attributed to a thousand different causes, and not one of them right. I don’t pretend to know the amatory tactics of his Royal Highness; but I have strong reasons for believing he was forced to raise the siege, though he had carried on his approaches with remarkable vigour. The lady, however, fearing the fort must be taken by escalade, made a sortie with a lover on whom she could place more reliance, and presently took shelter within the entrenchments of matrimony.”

“Entrenchments do you call them? I think then I might say, from my own knowledge, that they very seldom stand before powerful artillery. The Prince, it is well known, has succeeded in battering them down in the case of ‘our good Howard;’ and in how many more, only those most interested in the secret can declare.”

“But what do you think of Sophy Howe running away with Anthony Lowther?”

“Oh that I looked for. Nanty had got the game in his own hand when I last had a glimpse of the affair.”

“’Tis but a poor look out for the girl; for Nanty, I am afraid, is a little too piratical. He will soon show her the black flag, and then she may shift for herself. The two Maids of Honour managed the affair extremely well. There was a pretty large party collected to go to Belsize House at Hampstead, to enjoy the pleasures of that pleasant dwelling, and to explore the rural beauties of the neighbourhood. Molly Bellenden and Sophy Howe with their attendant swains; the Princess of Wales and her favourite philosophers—Philip Dormer and the Irish Duchess and one or two more of the Princess’s usual attendants went in coaches or on horseback, as they pleased; and after a journey, fortunately unmolested by highwaymen, they succeeded in making a comfortable lodgment in the commodious apartments of that excellent inn.

“Plenty of junketing, with a little philosophy as usual for the Princess, made the hours pass lightly, and the time for departure arrived. There was then a gathering together of the travellers; but it was quickly discovered to the astonishment of the diminished party, that four were absent without leave. The cause, however, soon transpired; and the remainder made as much haste as possible

back to spread the news. The town was mightily amused, and many a smart young fellow made a pilgrimage to Belsize House in hopes of picking up a stray Maid of Honour, as he had heard it reported that two had been *lost* there."

The two friends laughed very heartily. The wine was getting low in the decanter, and seemed to be giving a pleasant fillip to their ideas.

"Does any one know what has become of my Lord Peterborough?" asked Walpole.

"Peterborough?" repeated the Duke. "Oh yes, I think he does his best to let the world know what he is doing, and does it in such a manner as to set every one talking of it. No sooner has one extravagance gone the round of the coffee-houses, than another follows at its heels. If to-day he is found ringing the nose of a bully, you may be sure to-morrow he will be thrashing a bailiff. Should he in the morning be heard of ducking a drunken parson in the river, in the evening fame will be certain to report his kicking some unfortunate Darby Captain down stairs. The last thing current of him was a horse-whipping of the Italian singer, Senisino, for affronting his mistress, the fair Anastasia Robinson. My Lord fancied he had a right to maintain

her reputation, inasmuch as he maintained herself, at a cost of a hundred a month. But lashing an opera singer did not satisfy Peterborough. Lord Stanhope ventured to make a joke on the subject, to which the hero of Fort Montjoie replied by a challenge—a kind of jest which ought to be considered vastly witty; for it is known to conclude with much point.”

“A pleasant recommendation in so serious an affair,” exclaimed Sir Robert, laughingly; “but what was the result?”

“Oh I believe it ended harmoniously, as ought anything having its rise in the Opera House,” replied the Duke. “It was settled without bloodshed, and the matchless Anastasia was allowed to ride her triumphant chariot through the town, and create the impression that she was not to be trifled with—except of course by her champion.”

“Well, what a man has well paid for, he may reasonably well appreciate,” observed the Minister, as he poured out the last glass; “but to make his friends esteem it as highly, at the sword’s point too, is, let me venture to say, being a ‘little too sharp upon one.’”

Sir Robert here rang for more wine, which required but very slight pressing to induce his guest

to try; and with their second bottle, which pleased even better than the first, there began a fresh batch of anecdotes and recollections; but as these became extremely scandalous, and not in a slight degree indelicate, the reader I have no doubt will readily excuse their publication. Suffice it to say, that before the whole of the wine had been drunk, so powerful was the new-born friendship that had sprung up in the hearts of these celebrated men, that the Duke vowed he would stick to the Minister through thick and thin, and demolish his enemies wherever he could find them; and the Minister as fervently swore he would be as a father to his distinguished recruit, and forward his interests with all the power he possessed.

They parted at last with the most affectionate expressions. Nevertheless the Duke of Wharton, notwithstanding his representations of amendment, went straight to the usual rendezvous of the Hell Fire Club, and excelled himself that night by the wildness of his excesses. Sir Robert Walpole proceeded to a meeting of his principal coadjutors, to arrange respecting the proceedings against the Bishop, and to elicit their congratulations on the powerful reinforcement to their party he had gained over.

The next day there was a busy and animated scene in the House of Lords. The Peers had assembled in strong force; one party impressing its members to support Ministers, the other as careful in collecting its strength to assault them. The only spaces in the benches were caused by the absence of the decapitated and exiled Peers, who had suffered in the cause of the Pretender. There was evidently great excitement throughout the body of the House. From the Lord Chancellor on the wool-sack, to the most insignificant adherent to the Government; from the most influential of their opponents, to the least cared for, all was animation and excitement. There was much whispering together; some were taking notes, and all attending to the proceedings with evidently a more than ordinary interest.

At the Bar of the House, below which was a crowd of spectators, stood Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester. The Bill of Pains and Penalties had already engaged the attention of both Houses for several days; and the excitement on the subject was intense both within doors and without. Evidence had been produced against the Bishop, which left little doubt of his having entered into secret communications with the Pretender; but

this evidence was vague, and with impartial judges would not have been pronounced strong enough to support a charge of High Treason.

The Government, however, determined so able an opponent should not escape them ; and Sir Robert Walpole, as he regarded the ranks of his political enemies, from the position he occupied below the bar, determined that in the Bishop's person they should receive a signal chastisement. Witnesses were being examined. A short, ungainly figure was giving his evidence in an embarrassed manner. It was the poet Pope—one of the warmest of the Bishop's friends ; but though he came to say all he could for his friend, he wanted the easy assurance that had assisted him so much when making love to Lady Wortley Montagu, and he blundered through his evidence in an extremely unsatisfactory manner. The debate was carried on with no slight degree of violence on either side, when Lord Townshend having finished a speech of some length, shewing my Lord of Rochester's crime in its gloomiest light, another member rose.

The Minister had no difficulty in distinguishing the Duke of Wharton. His Grace looked as if scarcely recovered from the excesses of the

preceding night; and Walpole doubted from his appearance, he would be able to produce the desired effect, by his anticipated declaration in favour of Government. He was agreeably surprised, however, to find that his cordial friend of yesterday commenced in a calm and self-possessed manner, as if quite master of his subject, and ready to make the most of it.

There was a pretty general movement throughout the House when the Duke rose. Sir Robert's colleagues had heard what had been done in Chelsea, and were anxious to hear how their new supporter would acquit himself; and there were many individuals among both parties, who, on recognizing in the speaker the notorious Duke of Wharton, were quite as curious to learn what a person of his character could have to say upon the subject: consequently, he had a very attentive audience.

As the young profligate was not troubled with timidity, he was able to express his sentiments with clearness and confidence. He entered into an able review of all the evidence that had been put forth in support of the Bill then before them. Walpole listened approvingly; acknowledging his young friend was likely to prove a valuable ally,

and congratulating himself on his sagacity in securing so much useful talent. As he continued to listen, however, and his hopeful friend proceeded to develope his views, the Minister began to feel a little surprised, then embarrassed, then amazed, then indignant, to a degree he found it difficult to restrain.

Sir Robert distinctly heard his young friend, one after another, produce all the strong points against the Bishop he had in the fulness of his confidence laid before him, during their convivial colloquy; and in a series of masterly arguments proceed to demolish them; and this he did with such effect, that the cheers of the opposition became most vociferous. Encouraged by the attention and the applause he was creating, on he went, exposing most completely the weakness of the charges that had been brought against the reverend prelate, till the Minister, confounded by the audacity of the attack, could hardly believe his ears. It then occurred to him how completely he had been the dupe of the Duke; that his regrets of the past had been affected, his promises for the future a deception; and that the visit to Chelsea was a premeditated plot to delude him into a false confidence, of which the im-

puident profligate was now taking such abominable advantage.

The good-humoured expression of the Minister's face certainly underwent a considerable change ; and as the plaudits of his political opponents rung in his ears, it is not extraordinary that his good temper should change with it. His party were equally confounded, and equally indignant ; but the speaker proceeded with his usual recklessness, as though he were at the head of his Mohocks, giving a "sweat" to some unfortunate victim.

Ministers were, however, too strong to be overthrown by an attack, even so unexpected as that the young rake had brought against them ; and Sir Robert was too well seasoned a statesman to be long affected by the hypocrisy of his pretended friend ; although he learned that he was boasting in every direction how cleverly he had imposed upon him. The Bill against the Bishop passed through its several stages, and was but little delayed even when that Prelate commenced his defence.

The speech of the Duke of Wharton was considered a most brilliant one, but that of the Bishop of Rochester was one of those extraor-

dinary orations which come into existence only at extraordinary times. He brought all the learning, all the logic, all the eloquence, which could most readily produce the effect he desired. He denied what appeared most criminatory, and what he could not deny he justified. He ridiculed the idea of being concerned in a plot to overthrow the Government, and demanded to know what object he could have in engaging in such an affair. He argued that it could not be from ambition, nor from avarice, nor from religion, as he had proved throughout his life, that considerations of advancement, of increase of means, or a desire of changing his faith, could have no effect upon him.

On the last point he said, "My Lords, ever since I knew what Popery was, I have opposed it; and the better I knew it, the more I opposed it. I begun my studies in divinity when the Popish controversy grew hot, with that immortal book of Tillotson's, when he undertook the Protestant cause in general; and as such, I esteemed him above all. You will pardon me, my Lords, if I mention one thing: thirty years ago I wrote in defence of Martin Luther, and have preached, expressed, and wrote to that purpose from my infancy; and whatever happens to me, I will

suffer anything, and by God's grace, burn at the stake, rather than depart from any material point of the Protestant religion, as professed in the Church of England."

The Bishop produced a considerable impression in his favour upon his judges, notwithstanding the prevalence amongst them of the deepest prejudices. His sincerity could not be doubted—for though the good prelate in his manner of living had not been in all things what was most consistent with the character of a right reverend divine; in talent and integrity he was a worthy pillar of the church to which he belonged. The concluding sentences of his defence were in the best spirit.

"If on any account," said he, "there shall still be thought by your Lordships to be any seeming strength in the proofs against me; if by your Lordship's judgments springing from unknown motives, if for any reasons or necessity of state, of the wisdom and justice of which I am no competent judge, your Lordships shall proceed to pass this bill against me, I shall dispose myself quietly and tacitly to submit to what you do. God's will be done: naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; and

whether he gives or takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord !”

Thus concluded a speech of two hours' length, and when the Bishop returned to his prison, his party hoped it might so lessen the number of his opponents, that it would open a chance of his escape. Perhaps had a division immediately occurred, it might have done something for him ; but when the subject was again brought forward, the House heard counsel in reply ; a violent debate ensued, when the opposition after struggling for three days to save him, found their strength inadequate ; a majority of eighty-three to forty-three pronounced Bishop Atterbury guilty of high treason, deprived him of his benefices, declared him incapable of exercising any office or enjoying any dignity within the King's dominions ; and sentenced him to exile for life, with the additional provision that any of his countrymen who ventured to hold communication with him abroad should be pronounced felons without benefit of clergy.

Bishop Atterbury shortly afterwards embarked for France in company with his favourite daughter Mrs. Morrice, and attended to the place of embarkation by an eager throng of fellow coun-

trymen, determined to shew him every respect. We need only add that he soon found cause to regret having strayed theology to politics, and to feel the truth of all that his shrewd friend, the Duchess of Marlborough, had said on the subject of the conspiracy in which he had so foolishly committed himself.

CHAPTER X.

A TRIPLE DUEL.

This sword I think I was telling you of, Mr. Sharper. This sword I'll maintain to be the best divine, anatomist, lawyer, or casuist in Europe ; it shall decide a controversy, or split a cause.

CONGREVE.

HANDSOME Hervey as has been already related, when about to be introduced by the Princess of Wales to her favourite Maid of Honour, assumed to be reluctant, and could scarcely be prevailed upon to offer himself to her as a partner ; but the beau was a privileged person, whose insolences were so much matters of course, that even the Princess felt disposed to tolerate them. It is an inexplicable mystery, the influence men of this

description acquire, which allows of their exercising a despotism no other tyranny ever approached.

Handsome Hervey in whatever related to fashion and breeding had become a dictator, whose sway was undisputed over both sexes; and the sense of his power made him indifferent to the opinions and even feelings of those around him, to a degree which sometimes possessed an extravagance quite ludicrous. In this way he said and did with impunity what no other man could hazard, without the expectation of being called to a severe account. This most effeminate of men was regarded with too much admiration for criticism; he laid down laws, he proposed changes, he pronounced judgments, and all obeyed as though he were at once an oracle and a deity.

One half of his extravagances proceeded from a love of singularity, that led him to speak as no one else spoke, and to act as no one else ventured to act; and while attending on the Princess to seek the young lady her Royal Highness seemed so disposed to recommend to his favour, he thought only of what extraordinary things he should do and say to her that should most excite her astonishment; for he felt assured she must be some

raw girl, whose ignorance was ready to betray itself at every thing she beheld.

But a most perfect revolution shortly made itself manifest in his opinions, which notwithstanding he for some time strenuously endeavoured to conceal from himself, produced some very singular effects in his conduct. He was too much alive to impressions from the graceful and refined, to observe unmoved the extremely elegant performance of his new acquaintance in the Minuet they danced together. Nevertheless, he kept up his usual indifference of manner—he was still cold, sententious, and supercilious; he was polite to his partner after his fashion, but his courtesy was frigid, and his attentions formal.

Handsome Hervey strove with himself to be as careless with respect to the young Maid of Honour as he had been with a hundred other pretty women, to whom he had found it necessary to extend the valuable favour of his temporary notice; but though he imposed upon others, he did not impose upon himself. Sleeping or waking, absent or present, he seemed to have ever before his eyes the form of the Brigadier's daughter, with all her inimitable grace floating along in the elegant evolutions of the Minuet de la Cour.

The matchless performance he never forgot ; it haunted him wherever he went. He thought of it, talked of it, dreamt of it. That intolerable lassitude which made him shun every kind of exertion till he found an ordinary observation too fatiguing to attempt, vanished entirely immediately he recalled to his recollection the lovely figure that had so completely charmed his senses. At other times he continued to drawl out two or three syllables to which he was obliged to give utterance, with a listless vacant air, as though he knew not what was required of him, and contrived when in company to say something peculiarly pertinent in extraordinary brief sentences, that kept up his reputation as a wit.

The beau tried to struggle against the fascination that had begun to exercise its influence over him. It is true he did not fly from the young lady, but though frequently in her company he kept as much aloof as possible, and apparently was quite oblivious of her presence. This, however, was but a deception. He was deeply engaged in making use of every sense that could bear to him any evidence of her actual existence. He treasured every word, he stored up every look, and though he rarely took even the slightest

share in the conversation that was going on around him, he was sure to carry away with him a lively remembrance of her portion of it.

In this way he became acquainted with the whole force and direction of her romantic sentiments, and no sooner did he understand how entirely her character was influenced by them, than he took measures to turn his knowledge to account. He sent for Jacob Tonson, and gave orders to be supplied with every romance of any celebrity that was procurable. The result was, Jacob and the boy in yellow smalls were diligently occupied for several days in bearing to his Lordship's lodgings the voluminous works he required.

Thus furnished, the beau whose dislike of fatigue had always been carried to a height that was truly ludicrous, shut himself up, gave out that he had left town that he might be free from interruption, and devoted himself to a most severe course of study, which ran through the vast collection that encumbered his floor. It required the strength of a Hercules to get through such a task; nevertheless, Handsome Hervey, the most effeminate of dandies, persisted till he found he was as thoroughly master of the subject as the

fascinating enthusiast who had induced him to pay attention to it.

He had never ventured on making the young beauty acquainted with the influence her charms had exerted over him; indeed so far from it he had, as we have said, kept himself in the back ground, as though not caring for her notice, or desirous of escaping it. On one occasion had there existed any suspicion of his sentiments in the Court circle, he would have betrayed himself. This was the poetical rivalry that was so remarkable a feature in the Arcadian scene got up at Hampton Court under the auspices of the Princess of Wales. The theme of his poem was the beautiful Maid of Honour; but Handsome Hervey had been so cautious of betraying the state of his feelings that no one suspected how near was the fair subject of his verses.

He had again nearly betrayed himself when he heard the news of Mary Lepel's extraordinary disappearance while proceeding to Petersham. He was in a most restless state during the whole of the time she remained in the power of Baron Bothmar; but as nothing worthy of credit could be heard respecting her, he continued in an exceedingly ill frame of mind, not knowing whether

she had eloped, according to the common report, or had been carried off, which had more than once been hinted at.

Handsome Hervey suffered extremely during this period. He seemed to his fellow promenaders at the Ring quite a different person. He looked spiritless and melancholy, and appeared in all his usual haunts with a grave and anxious air, as different as possible to the intense sense of satisfaction that had previously been so prominent in his singularly effeminate features. His friends fancied he was seriously indisposed. Suddenly there came news of Mary Lepel's return, and as suddenly the invalid became again as indifferent and contented as ever. Some remarks were made on Handsome Hervey's rapid improvement; but so little was he suspected of entertaining a preference for the young favourite of the Court, that no one suggested the true cause of it.

The attempted abduction of the Maid of Honour on the day of the Arcadian party, also excited him extremely; yet he contrived to conceal, during the confusion, the peculiar interest he felt in the matter. But on the memorable occasion when it was discovered that the fair huntress had disappeared during the hunt with the royal

buck hounds, he displayed an extent of sympathy that ought to have betrayed him. His inquiries, his remarks, his suggestions astonished his associates. The listless, apathetic, almost silent beau underwent a complete transformation, for which they could not account. This continued till he had obtained information of the place of her confinement, when he lost not a moment in proceeding to her father.

At this time it so happened that Brigadier General Lepel was with his regiment at a distance of nearly two hundred miles; but as the distracted beau made his errand known at Petersham, John Coachman and Pompey volunteered to accompany him for the purpose of assisting in procuring their young mistress's liberation. They soon transported themselves to the neighbourhood of the Duke of Wharton's handsome seat, and as rapidly as possible opened a communication with the fair prisoner, and commenced a negociation with Mrs. Kitty to help their project, as has elsewhere been stated. This, however, was not done so secretly but that the clever myrmidons of the Dukes of Somerset and Buckingham, who were lurking in the neighbourhood, obtained a knowledge of it, and the indefatigable

Captain Spatterdash and Jack Wildair were instantly in communication with their principals who, determined to leave no effort untried to secure their object, posted to the scene of action, so that they might be able to take immediate advantage of any circumstances in their favour.

They observed the preparations making for the escape of the captive, and much more secretly made their own. They ascertained the night of the projected elopement, and one quite unknown to the other, as he believed, determined to carry her off directly she made her appearance outside the walls. The Duke of Somerset was lurking beneath her window when he beheld the ladder of ropes thrown out. How he profited by that circumstance the reader is aware; but unfortunately for his reputation as a gallant, his long watching and great anxiety overpowered him, and his Grace, forgetting he was not enjoying his usual nap guarded by his faithful watchers, became guilty of that offence against good breeding which had so completely damaged his character with his fair companion.

The Duke of Buckingham's plan to intercept the fugitive had nearly succeeded in consequence of her having availed herself of the rope ladder

a little before the time appointed for the true Sylvanus to be at the spot; but as we have shown, he was not more fortunate than his rival. He endeavoured to divert his chagrin at his failure by abusing his useful acquaintance Captain Spatterdash, whom he cashiered, much to that worthy gentleman's dissatisfaction, and then made the best of his way to town.

The Duke of Somerset was still more incensed at his discomfiture. His proud spirit could not endure failure. He was in a towering passion, and discharged his footman, discharged his coachman, and discharged his postillion; and lastly discharged his sagacious and faithful assistant Jack Wildair, vowing he would abandon gallantry, as being too laborious a pursuit for a nobleman of his great influence and dignity.

He also returned to town, but had not long reached the family mansion when a letter was placed in his hands, which on opening he read as follows :

“ My Lord Duke,

“ Though not a stranger to your Grace's worth, and the great dignity of your family, you

must pardon me if I venture to request your attention to a matter that concerns you nearly, inasmuch as it affects your honour and reputation. I have been made acquainted with your designs upon Madam Lepel. 'Tis a thousand pities that a nobleman of such consideration should not have directed his thoughts elsewhere; I should then be spared the unpleasant task of acquainting a person of your Grace's breeding with the circumstance of my being bound in honour to resent such designs as an insult to that lady and an unpardonable affront to myself—entertaining as I do an honourable passion for that peerless creature which will admit of no rivalry.

“I therefore venture to request you will do me the honour of meeting me and my valued friend my Lord of Peterborough, who has been so good as to insist on seconding me in my quarrel, at the back of Montagu House, at as early an hour as will suit your convenience, with such friends as your Grace may desire to be present, to prove by mortal arbitrement which of us shall be allowed to entertain our pretensions to the lady in question.

“Waiting the favour of your answer, with every

sentiment of profound respect, I have the honour to remain,

“ My Lord Duke,

“ Your Grace’s most obedient, humble servant,

“ HERVEY.

“ To his Grace,

The Duke of Somerset.”

The perusal of this missive, courteously as it was worded, threw the haughty Duke into a tempest of pride and indignation. He affected to be amazed at the fellow’s presumption in challenging so great a man:—indeed, at first he was disposed to treat the whole affair with contempt; thinking it would be best to get rid of the presumptuous challenger, by sending to him any of those bold fellows about town, who for a moderate recompense would pistol or poniard, according to agreement; but a few minutes’ reflection assured him that to such a person as the son of the Earl of Bristol he could not refuse the treatment of a gentleman; and after calling in his friend, Philip Dormer, he thought proper to reply to the note as haughty an acquiescence, as it was possible for him to express.

A similar letter was sent by the beau to the Duke of Buckingham; but he received it in a very

different spirit. His Grace was suffering from a fit of the gout; but he laughed heartily at the idea of being called to account by such a milksop; and Anthony Lowther dropping in upon him just at this moment, he immediately caused preparations to be made for a hostile meeting.

The Duke of Wharton was quite furious when he discovered that the fair victim he had so cleverly entrapped had as cleverly made her escape. He was somewhat reconciled to his loss, however, when he discovered that neither of his ancient rivals had been more successful than himself. He read the beau's challenge to a noisy circle of licentious companions, to whom it afforded an exhaustless fund of amusement. Nevertheless the young profligate was too well aware of the usages amongst gentlemen to return any other than the proper answer.

In the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury there existed an enormous mass of building called Montagu House, which still retains some of its features though metamorphosed into the British Museum. At the back of this mansion there was a convenient space, which being a little retired from the public eye had become the favourite resort of duellists. It was the Chalk Farm, or

Wimbledon Common of a hundred and twenty years ago. Hostile meetings were frequent; the parties in such affairs coming with their seconds, and some attended by a throng of friends; and, the small sword being the chosen weapon, thrusting at each other till one was wounded, or by the loss of his sword, prevented from continuing the conflict. Sometimes these meetings ended fatally; but such a catastrophe luckily, did not occur often.

It was on a fine morning, in the spring of the year 1720, that two gentlemen were seen there, evidently waiting for some person or persons. There was a marked contrast between them:—a tall, thin figure, wrapped in an old campaign coat, a pair of extremely lean legs, cased in high military boots; the most undeniable lantern jaws, surmounted by a capacious duvillers, or full bottomed wig, with a little beaver fiercely cocked at top, gave evidence of the presence of the Earl of Peterborough; and in the extremely refined appearance and handsome suit, the delicate features and elegant figure of his companion, there could be no difficulty in recognising Handsome Hervey.

“Zounds! *camerado*!” exclaimed the Earl,

“your friends are not over punctual. They are not fellows to mount a bastion at the first burst of daylight; or lead a troop in the grey of the morn to surprise a village. Which of the two do you intend carving first; eh, my little fighting cock?”

“Why, I expect the Duke of Somerset will be first at the rendezvous, my dear Lord,” replied Handsome Hervey.

“What, old black muzzle!” he exclaimed. “Odds, culverins! you’ll have a pretty opponent; whom if you don’t mistake for old Scratch himself, it will not be the fault of his worship’s ugly mug. And he’s as proud as Lucifer too; and always cock-a-hoop on the subject of his own dignity. Well, my Hector of Troy, if you don’t drill a hole through his body big enough to let in a little common sense, you won’t be a doing him a good action, that’s all.”

“Perhaps, he may be inclined to doubt that would be doing him a benefit,” said the beau, smiling.

“’Sdeath man! Let him doubt, and be hanged,” answered Lord Peterborough. “If the fellow can’t be convinced of his good fortune when so important a service is done him, he deserves to

have his ears slit. Then the next comer is Buckingham," he presently added, "Garbage, my Lord—garbage, a fellow whose stomach is like a whirlpool—it sucks in everything within its influence. A little blood-letting would do him good, Hervey—a deal of good. He is getting towards the end of his pilgrimage. His sand must be nearly run out. Breathe a vein for him, Camerado, if you love me. It will reduce the excessive heat of his constitution, and keep him chaste, in spite of himself. Blood-letting is a monstrous fine remedy. I've known it administered in some pretty serious cases with extraordinary success."

"I fancy your Lordship must have been the practitioner, and Spain the country of the patient," observed Handsome Hervey.

"Yes, my little desperado, there may have been something of that sort," replied the other. "Like Jack Ketch I may say I have done justice on many."

"The Duke of Wharton has the reputation of being a good swordsman, I think," said Handsome Hervey.

"Has he, Camerado? then the more honour for you," replied his friend. "It would have taken a dozen such swordsmen to have made one

of the gallant fellows I led into Fort Montjoie. That was the time for gentlemen of the sword, Camerado. We were not three hundred horse; and no more than nine hundred foot, yet we had presently half Spain at our disposal. The country was worth fighting for too, my little Hector. But the Signoras! Zounds, Camerado, the very thought of their flashing eyes makes me fancy myself again in Catalonia."

"Ah, my dear Lord, if report do not belie you, your conquests of forts and towns were nothing in comparison with the success you had with the fairer portion of the inhabitants."

"Truly, Camerado, I had no reason to complain; but why come not your three men in buckram, my little Hector? By the God of War, this tarrying looks ill. Where's the proud Somerset, where the jovial Wharton, where oh, where's the lusty Buckingham? Talk of the devil, friend, and lo here he comes, limping like a sore-footed friar after a week's fast. Now, Camerado, mind your hits, look sharp, and strike home."

At this moment the Duke of Buckingham was seen advancing accompanied by Anthony Lowther. They were laughing very merrily at some not over refined anecdote of days gone by, the

Duke had been telling his second. The principals saluted each other courteously, and so did the seconds. Handsome Hervey as usual studiously elegant, with all the air of a Narcissus; Buckingham free and jocular, as though coming to meet a pleasant companion; Lowther with the languishing grace that had been so fatal to the peace of the unfortunate Sophy Howe; and Lord Peterborough bluff and hearty like a General at parade.

"Gentlemen, no offence," said he, "but we have waited for some time for the pleasure of your company."

"Egad, I thought so!" exclaimed the Duke with a laugh, that shook his pendant cheeks like a pair of jelly bags; "but Lowther spied the prettiest black-eyed creature as we came along, and by Jove, I couldn't for the life of me resist following her to learn where she might be met with."

"Oh, a lady of course is sufficient excuse for anything," replied the Earl; "but now, Lowther, let us proceed to business. You, of course, are aware that the worthy gentleman for whom I appear in this business advances pretensions to the beautiful Mary Lepel, which makes him regard the late proceedings of his Grace of Buck-

ingham as an affront to him no man of honour could put up with. This, as I take it, is a legitimate cause of quarrel. By the God of war, Sir, I have known many a tall fellow run through the body without having given half such provocation."

"We do not deny that there is good and sufficient cause of quarrel," replied Anthony Lowther, "my Lord Duke is here to meet my Lord Hervey, and grant him the satisfaction he desires."

"Devilish proper proceeding on his part," resumed Lord Peterborough; "but his Grace of course is aware that the vanquished in this contest must give up now and for ever all claim to the lady, should he be allowed to escape with life."

"That is understood."

"Well then let's measure their Ferraras, and then set our cocks in their proper positions."

The weapons were compared, which were small swords such as were usually employed in duels. No material difference in length was perceptible; they were given by their seconds to the combatants, who were placed before each other, and then the seconds retired to a convenient distance.

Handsome Hervey gracefully bowed to his antagonist, and courteously bade him commence the attack, which his Grace presently did in a rather spirited manner. He had had some little experience in such affairs—the natural result of his offences against husbands and lovers; indeed he was not at all ill pleased in his old age to be again engaged in one. But it was soon seen that he now wanted many requisites for a successful duellist; the gout in one of his legs, a scantiness of breath, and indifferent sight, almost incapacitated him from taking part in such a contest.

The beau however effeminate in appearance, excelled in manly accomplishments, and the small sword he had practised from boyhood. He was soon made aware how completely his antagonist was at his mercy; but he allowed him to labour as hard as he liked in making the most furious thrusts, and in jumping about with an activity quite extraordinary for his years. Presently, however, symptoms began to shew themselves of the Duke's failing wind, and then Lord Hervey commenced pressing him hard. The perspiration rolled down the Duke's pendulous cheeks in large drops as he defended himself; but it was evident to the seconds that he had not a

chance, and they advanced to witness the catastrophe they knew to be impending.

Handsome Hervey, however, to their astonishment, did not wound his antagonist, though there could be no doubt he might easily have done so, but continued to press him closer and closer till the Duke, panting and blowing like an overdriven ox, after a wild attempt to keep up a defence, sunk down on the grass from sheer exhaustion. His opponent immediately raised him from the ground in the most polite way imaginable; but though his Grace was free from wounds, it was evident he was not in a state to renew the contest. In a few faint words he acknowledged his defeat; but for some time he continued to look more dead than alive, and could scarcely stand without support. His constitution had so suffered by his excesses that he was in no condition to endure the violent exercise he had been forced into adopting.

He was, however, slowly regaining his wonted composure when the Duke of Somerset, accompanied by Philip Dormer, and followed by a stranger who was a surgeon, made their appearance. The Duke was, if possible, a thousand times more haughty than ever; his gloomy visage looking as though he considered he was degrading the illus-

trious house of Somerset in granting a meeting to an adversary beneath him in rank. A slight inclination was all the acknowledgment he deigned to make to the courteous salutation of his antagonist ; and whilst his second was arranging the preliminaries with the Earl of Peterborough, his Grace coolly took snuff, without according any farther notice of the person with whom he was so soon to be engaged in mortal strife.

The ceremonies were soon gone through, and the proud Somerset and Handsome Hervey were presently crossing their bright weapons with steady hands and determined looks. The lover of the Brigadier's daughter soon found he had a very different antagonist to the last. The Duke was a wary old swordsman, and what he wanted in strength he made up in cunning.

"The old fellow holds himself well, Dormer !" exclaimed the Earl of Peterborough. "I protest I did not give his wrinkles credit for retaining so much of the fire of youth."

The Duke overheard this, and was inexpressibly disgusted that the head of the great house of Somerset should be designated by the vulgar name of "old fellow;" he, however, was too experienced a hand to allow his indignation to interfere

with his swordsmanship. He went steadily to work, thrusting and parrying with considerable deliberation and some skill. Great, however, was his astonishment, not unmixed with mortification, when he found his sword in some unaccountable manner jerked out of his hand. He stood disarmed, looking extremely indignant at what he chose to think a very unpardonable act.

“Suffer me to present your Grace with your weapon,” said Handsome Hervey, with a graceful bow presenting the handle of the fugitive sword to its owner. The Duke of Somerset looked as if he thought he ought to be exceedingly angry ; and, as if he considered Lord Hervey to be taking a great liberty, he took back his weapon with an extremely ill grace, muttering some unintelligible words about “accident,” as his opponent, with another inimitable bow, fell back.

Presently they set to work again, the Duke particularly careful that he would not part with his weapon so easily, in a hurry. Alas ! the Duke, great man as he was, speedily experienced the truth of the proverb “Man proposes but God disposes.” On a sudden away flew the unfaithful steel, and the Duke stood unarmed before his young antagonist, looking a thousand times more dissatisfied, and more disconcerted than before.

“A million pardons!” exclaimed the beau, again restoring his sword. “I hope your Grace will excuse my little inadvertence.” The Duke looked like a sulky school-boy receiving a reprimand. He seemed to think it derogatory to the blood of the Somersets to receive such attentions, and was inclined to attribute no small degree of presumption on the person who had the bad taste to thrust his obligations on the last Duke of that distinguished family. He, however, ultimately thought better of it, and ventured to renew the contest.

The seconds appeared not a little amused at this repetition, and the surgeon and the Duke of Buckingham evidently thought it equally entertaining; but their smiles at last turned to irrepressible laughter on observing the same incident occur again.

The Duke of Somerset had for some time been extremely ill at ease; he began to suspect that he was placed in a very unbecoming position; but when he heard that he had become an object of ridicule—he, Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset, laughed at!—he looked the concentration of scorn and indignation. With a gesture intended to be dignified he sheathed his sword, haughtily intimating

to his opponent that he would no longer dispute his claim to the favour of the lady for whom they had fought; and then turning on his heel was about quitting the company with a glance of contempt, when his further progress was stopped by the hurried advance of the Duke of Wharton and Captain Spatterdash.

It was impossible to look towards the young Duke without receiving the most complete conviction of his settled and unchangeable dissoluteness. A late orgie at the Hell Fire Club had left its traces in unmistakeable characters on his sallow complexion and glassy eye balls. In short he had not had time to sleep off his debauch. He could scarcely be called sober; his walk was anything but steady, and his look heavy and lethargic.

His dress was also in extreme disorder, as if he had been engaged in a Mohock irruption, or had been dragged to the round house by infuriated watchmen. His stockings and breeches were soiled with mud—his coat was rent, one of his ruffles hung in tatters, and his cocked hat had a dent in it as though a furious blow had been aimed at the owner's head by a bludgeon or halbert.

What a contrast did the appearance of this profligate nobleman present to the elaborate refine-

ment and finished elegance of Handsome Hervey, as in an easy attitude he awaited the unsteady approach of the most formidable of his rivals. For while Buckingham and Somerset had long passed the vigorous season of life, the Duke of Wharton was but just entering upon it, and enjoyed the reputation of being well skilled in the small sword.

“Could the peerless Mary Lepel fancy a man so brutal in his appearance?” thought the Beau. “Could she, who doated on the unapproachable perfections of a Prince Oroondates, reconcile herself to so besotted, so slovenly, so degraded a creature, as this Philip, Duke of Wharton, has made himself!”

“Hullo, old cock!” cried the young Duke of Wharton, as he stumbled against the Duke of Somerset. “Zounds!” he exclaimed, as that nobleman proudly turned away, “your Grace looks as melancholy as a sick monkey. Egad, if I hadn’t known you, I should have taken you for the mummy of one of the Pharoahs that had left the Pyramids on an excursion of pleasure. Upon my life, at beholding so venerable a visage, one feels devilishly inclined to ask after Joseph and Potiphar’s wife!”

"May I never do an ill turn," cried the Captain, laughing heartily at his new patron's jest, "if that idea now isn't mightily diverting."

"'Sdeath, Sir! let me tell you your mirth's deucedly out of place," sternly cried Lord Peterborough. "We are here, Sir, to fight like gentlemen, not to grin like baboons."

"Like what! Sirrah! let me tell you—" exclaimed the Captain fiercely.

"Silence, fellow!" shouted the Earl, as he strode towards him; "if you presume to address another word to me, I'll cut off your ears, and make you take your breakfast off them."

"Hold your tongue, you cursed fool!" cried his new patron, "Peterborough is as capital a caterer as one would wish to meet with; and no doubt, in such a case as this, thinks every man should furnish his own provisions."

There was a general laugh, in which Captain Spatterdash thought it wisest to join; but he did so with a much more modified hilarity than had distinguished the laugh that had drawn upon him the Earl of Peterborough's observation.

"Oh! Hervey, is that you?" demanded the Duke of Wharton, familiarly. "Devilish glad to see you, my buck. Hope you'll spit those two

venerable old geese for their presumption regarding the fair Lepel. Deucedly provoking it was, her escape ; especially after I had taken such pains to get possession of her. But I'm not going to give up so lovely a woman without a fight. Come on, my first of Maccaronis ! Come on, my prince of fine gentlemen ! Come on, my king of beaus. Now for the destruction of that delicate waistcoat ; now for the marring of that matchless coat. Mourn, ye tailors, for your glory is about to depart !”

With these words the Duke of Wharton made a fierce attack on his rival. Handsome Hervey defended himself with not less spirit ; but he soon found he had a very different antagonist than either of the two venerable noblemen he had so readily vanquished. He was hard pressed ; but the resources of his skill were great, and the young Duke's impetuosity was not attended with sufficient caution.

The vanquished parties in the duel, and their seconds, approached in no slight anxiety to witness the result of the contest. Handsome Hervey rested satisfied with defending himself till an opportunity presented itself of employing some clever trick of fence. It came much sooner than

his rash opponent could have anticipated. The Duke went pressing on, thrusting with a rapidity that, with a less skilful defence would have soon rendered his opponent harmless ; but when he fancied he had an advantage, the other made a vigorous jerk with his weapon, and the next minute the Duke stood with nothing but his sword-hilt in his hand ; the blade had been broken short off, and lay at some distance on the grass.

“ May ten thousand devils torture the thief of a cutler who sold me that weapon !” exclaimed he, flinging the hilt on the ground. “ Needs must when the devil drives ; eh, Hervey ? So I give up the fair Lepel. Cursedly provoking, though !”

“ May I never do an ill turn—”

“ Ah !” shouted Lord Peterborough, coming forward menacingly. “ Who gave that Cock and Bottle rascal leave to speak amongst gentlemen ?”

“ Stab my vitals, I think his Grace hath made choice of a very unworthy second,” remarked Philip Dormer.

“ Unworthy, Sir !” exclaimed Captain Spatterdash, with much virtuous indignation. “ My

friend, the Duke of Buckingham, can vouch for my gentility."

"*I* knave?" cried that nobleman sharply, "I never stand up for what I know never existed. I vow I would sooner vouch for the gentility of a foot-pad."

"May I never do an ill turn—" began the discomfited Captain, with an appealing look to his last patron.

"Nay, noble Captain, I cannot help thee!" exclaimed the Duke of Wharton; "nor do I think I would if I could. For I shrewdly suspect thou art as great a rogue as ever dangled on Tyburn tree."

Lord Peterborough drew his sword, and so did Philip Dormer, and one or two others who thought there might be good sport in frightening the fellow; but Captain Spatterdash had for the last few minutes had a retreat in contemplation, and was edging away from the company, when, on the hostile demonstration just made, it appeared high time for a start, and he began to run towards Bloomsbury.

He was closely pursued however, and overtaken. As Handsome Hervey was departing from

the scene of his triumph, he could hear plainly the cries of the Captain as he was being beaten with the flats of their swords, till he had got a considerable distance out of the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XI.

RIVAL CIVILITIES.

Good morrow, good captain—I'll wait on you down—
You shan't stir a foot—you'll think me a clown—
For all the world, captain, not half an inch farther—
You must be obeyed—your servant, Sir Arthur.

SWIFT.

BRIGADIER GENERAL LEPEL sat in the breakfast room at Petersham Manor, his campaign-coat and horseman's boots plainly enough denoting he was preparing for a ride; an inference sanctioned by the riding-whip, gloves, and cocked-hat that lay at hand upon the table near him. Nevertheless, the Brigadier, as he sat back in his heavy arm-chair, appeared too much engaged in his reflections to entertain any immediate idea of taking the air. He seemed completely to have given himself up to his own thoughts and speculations;

and that they were pleasing, no one who beheld the smile of self-satisfaction that had evidently taken complete possession of his features, could for a moment doubt.

Round the walls of his apartment the several representations of himself seemed to reflect, as in a mirror, that exquisite complacency, that unutterable exultation, and that elevated approval, which were so conspicuous in the countenance of the courtly original. The Ensign smirked, the Captain smiled, the Major ogled, the Colonel winked, and the General chuckled, as if to prove their identity with the well-satisfied gentleman in the campaign coat.

Time had dealt very leniently with the Brigadier, since we last presented him to the reader. He looked elderly, certainly; but there was a freshness about his antiquity that was quite as prepossessing as the bloom and plumpness of youth. He wore his wrinkles with the air of a Narcissus, and crows-feet in him seemed features that Apollo himself might have been proud of. Indeed it was sufficiently evident that Brigadier General Lepel was a remarkably handsome old man. This by the way he knew as well as any body. Perhaps he would not have called himself

old ; he might even hesitate in considering himself middle-aged ; nevertheless, it is equally true, a good many years had passed since he was young.

The Brigadier was absorbed in one of those day dreams which not unfrequently visit sanguine people on particular good terms with themselves—people connected in any way with Courts, and ambitious of obtaining distinction by their own merit are above all persons liable to be visited by such visions, and the Brigadier had long been in the habit of indulging himself in this way. The fact was, he had returned from a service in which he had been sent by the Minister, which had kept him in a distant part of the island for several months past, to find his daughter the subject of every one's conversation, and the proceedings of her rival suitors the theme of every one's commentary.

The old beau, in simple truth, was as delighted as man could be, on learning the exalted rank of several of her admirers, and the pertinacity with which they had pursued her with their affectionate attentions. He was a courtier born and bred, with whom rank, like charity, covered a multitude of sins ; indeed his reverence for it was so

great that it completely perverted his sense of right, making him perfectly regardless of the crimes and follies of nobility, as though he thought such persons privileged to be as foolish and vicious as they pleased.

Therefore, when he learned the trick with which the young Duke of Wharton had obtained possession of his daughter, and the unwarrantable attempts of the old Dukes of Somerset and Buckingham to carry her off, he saw nothing beyond the ordinary gallantry of the time. Nothing at all disreputable. Far different, he thought there was much cause for congratulation in the fact of such gallantry having proceeded from three individuals possessed of the highest rank below the blood royal in the kingdom. If the Dukes of Somerset and Buckingham had not been provided with helpmates, the Brigadier would have looked forward to an alliance with one of them notwithstanding their tremendous superiority in age, with great and singular satisfaction; but these elderly gallants were already monopolized by Duchesses of their selection; there therefore was no hope of seeing his daughter either Duchess of Somerset or of Buckingham.

But when he considered the Duke of Wharton,

he found no such obstacle in the way of the realization of his ambitious wishes for his daughter, and he was calculating on having the Duke for a son-in-law, and on the increase of influence at Court he might obtain through such a connection, when we introduced him to the reader a page or two back.

He was in the midst of a particularly pleasant scene at Court, in which he shone more brilliantly than he had done even when enjoying the countenance of his illustrious patroness the Great Duchess, when the door opened, and the dusky features of Pompey were thrust into the apartment, ornamented with one of his most irresistible grins, as he announced Lord John Hervey; and in a few seconds the graceful figure and effeminate countenance of Handsome Hervey, set off by an admirable new wig and a matchless suit of embroidered sky blue velvet, with his rare clouded cane in one hand and his cocked hat gracefully carried in the other, were observed just at the entrance. He was in the act of making a bow, the elegance of which would have been a fortune to a dancing master.

The Brigadier rose from his seat. He was a connoisseur in every thing connected with the in-

comparable science of *breeding*; not the word so frequently in the mouths of gentlemen farmers and other cattle fanciers from Michaelmas to Christmas, which means cultivating qualities in the highest degree gross and bestial; but its namesake of an exactly opposite significance, for it means the careful nourishing of whatever tends to grace, refinement, and elegance. The Brigadier was well qualified to be a judge of matters of this kind. He had shown himself deeply learned in all the minutiae of elegant scholarship; he had, it might be said, taken the very highest degree in the *beaux* arts; and when he noticed the entrance of his well dressed and well bred visitor, he could not but feel convinced that no ordinary brother of the craft stood before him.

The Brigadier returned the polite genuflection with as much care as if he had suddenly found himself before a throne. If he aimed at excelling the gentleman who had so irresistibly introduced himself to his notice in this act, we do not think he succeeded as perfectly as he desired; but then it must be remembered that the back of the Brigadier was not likely to be quite so elastic as that of his youthful visitor; and though they were both eminently handsome men, an advantage of

twenty or thirty years is far from conferring that superiority to the bow it gives to some other things.

The proprietor of Petersham Manor happened, however, to enjoy that felicitous opinion of himself which admits of no humiliating acknowledgments, and when he beheld the bow of his visitor and regarded his appearance, he rose as though he felt himself provoked to an encounter in an art in which he was well satisfied he had no rival; and as he recovered his perpendicular immediately after his own performance of the ceremony that had seemed to challenge his superiority, the winning smile that irradiated his well preserved features told plainer than any language, that the sense of security in which he had been allowed to live so long was not in the slightest degree disturbed.

Handsome Hervey seemed as if inclined to place the question of rivalry beyond dispute, for when the well bred host had finished his act of recognition of his well bred visitor, the latter advanced two steps, with a management of both cane and hat that must have made the most sanguine beau despair, and perpetrated a second bow. Never was any ceremony so exquisitely performed; never had the human figure been known

to achieve a motion and government of its limbs at once so full of courtesy and so expressive of elegance. There was genius in every part of the act, from the easy declension of the head to the courtly recovery of the shoulders. It was a marvel of breeding, it was the perfection of polish. Had Apollo been taught by the Graces it is doubtful whether he could have attained such excellence.

But Brigadier General Lepel saw not the repetition in this light, though he had his attention completely absorbed by it. He saw only a gentleman who seemed desirous of paying a person of his merit proper respect, and believing himself to be in his own element, he felt inclined to offer him a proper acknowledgment ; therefore, advancing two steps he also repeated his genuflection, and to do himself and his companion justice, endeavoured to perform the ceremony with more care even than he had employed before. It is needless to say that in the opinion of no one except that particularly self-esteeming officer, could his performance, elaborate as it certainly was, be compared with the preceding one.

Handsome Hervey and the Brigadier stood there the champions of courtesy—the latter re-

presenting the beau of Queen Mary, the other the beau of a new school, or rather a new generation destined to eclipse its predecessors in the united sciences of conduct and compliment. It was the velvet suit of the one with its silver buttons and gold buckles, compared to the campaign coat and buckskins of the other with much less valuable decorations. But the Brigadier would not have been true to his own nature had he for a moment doubted the supereminence of those accomplishments to which he owed so many obligations, and fully satisfied with the favourable impression he fancied he had created, he at once proceeded to the additional courtesy of offering his visitor a chair.

Handsome Hervey lost no time in availing himself of this civility, and as readily as gracefully followed the action of his host, by drawing a chair to a place, where they could most conveniently sit together. But here a new contest arose. Each stood by his chair, erect yet easy in his carriage, smiling with winning affability, and waiting for the other to be seated. The host pointed to the vacant chair; his visitor courteously acknowledged the civility, and with eloquent pantomime signified that he waited for the example of his senior. The Brigadier pressed, but Handsome

Hervey remained firm. The old beau in vain exercised all the ingenuity of compliment, which his experience gave him ; but the other proved himself invulnerable.

It was a struggle that brought out all the resources of the academy of compliments, and was continued with such equal skill on both sides, that they were at last obliged to come to a compromise. They agreed to seat themselves simultaneously ; but so bent was the younger beau on displaying his breeding, that he delayed the descent to his seat at least half a second after the Brigadier. If this did not sufficiently declare his superiority, the high-bred ease with which he placed himself in the chair, though encumbered with sword, cane, and hat shewed a degree of refinement, which it was in vain for the most accomplished gentleman of the Court of Queen Mary, or indeed of any other Court, to hope to rival.

We despair of giving the reader an adequate idea of the style of conversation that ensued. Polished indeed were the courtesies with which the polite host received the compliments of his extremely polite visitor. His acknowledgments of the services he had rendered his daughter were only a shade less powerful than the expressions

of the other's consideration for Madam Lepel and himself; but such formed the preliminaries only to the real business of the interview. It was merely the skirmishing leading to a general engagement.

After a sufficiency of this kind of conversation, Handsome Hervey found it advisable to enter upon the purport of his visit. He began by lauding the character of the Brigadier, and by dilating on the gratification that any right minded person must feel, in the idea of being connected with a family so distinguished; and then proceeded to mention the rare merits of his daughter, and to describe the feelings he had experienced ever since he had had the honour of being numbered amongst her acquaintance. The beau's language was extremely well chosen, and his complimentary allusions were made in words evidently carefully and well selected; but as soon as Mary Lepel became his theme, his ideas were absolutely eloquent, and his sentences would have done honour to a Demosthenes.

He acquainted her father with the rise and progress of his passion: how her incomparable beauty and inimitable grace first dazzled him at the State Ball, during their mutual performance of the

Minuet de la Cour; how a thousand nameless elegances became visible to him, and took his senses captive during the whole period in which he was allowed to enjoy her society at Court; how diligently after hearing her express her inclination towards certain qualities, he had laboured to acquire them to render himself as much as possible the object of her regard; and how having had the good fortune to perform towards her an acceptable act of service, and discovering that he had succeeded in recommending himself to her attention, he had taken the earliest opportunity to obtain an interview with her respected parent, to express the pride and happiness he must experience in being allowed the enviable privilege, inseparable from the position of an acknowledged suitor for her hand, entertaining a hope as he did, of being permitted to crown his ambition by laying his hand and fortune at her feet.

Nothing could exceed the polite attention of the Brigadier during the whole of this communication, save the friendly interest with which he seemed to listen. His countenance beamed with gratification: he looked pride and satisfaction and the most cordial good humour, and encouraged his young friend to proceed by an occasional

word or two, that wonderfully helped his looks in expressing his grateful appreciation of the compliment that had been paid him. Saving this, the proud and happy father heard him uninterruptedly to the end. He then proceeded to reply:

The Brigadier began by referring to the very high honour he must consider had just been done him, by the proposal he had just heard from a member of one of the noblest families in the kingdom, and assured the candidate for his daughter's affections, that had he looked carefully around him for a son-in-law, he could not have selected a nobleman in every way so desirable as his present associate. He then alluded to his daughter, and to the gratification she could not but enjoy in her having attracted towards her, one who seemed so well qualified to confer honour on her judgment. He reiterated what he had already said as to the high sense he entertained of the services for which they were so deeply indebted to him, and paid his Lordship an abundance of well turned compliments on his gallantry, prudence, and address.

Nothing seemed more plain than the intense

satisfaction of the Brigadier at the prospect of having for a son-in-law, his extremely well dressed and extremely well bred companion. The secret appeared beaming out of his smiling physiognomy, and oozing out of the train of elegant compliments that so liberally garnished his conversation. Unfortunately however for this inference, the tone of his voice now greatly altered ; and he began lamenting that circumstances, over which he had no control, circumstances the most aggravating that could be conceived, should prevent his following his inclinations and obtaining a son-in-law so completely to his satisfaction. But he stated most sententiously and with a very lively display of sympathy, that trials of this vexatious nature were the common lot of man, and that the anxious father could not be expected to escape them any more than hundreds of meritorious individuals whose happiness they were continually marring. Then he added a great deal more, expressive of his grief at being obliged to give up a proposal so flattering ; and wound up the whole with his conviction that a person of Lord John Hervey's merit, would be sure to attach himself to a family of a station at least as exalted as his

own. Finally, the Brigadier presented his snuff box with an air that had been deemed so irresistible by the great Duchess.

Handsome Hervey may have deeply felt the rejection of his suit—for a rejection he knew it was, despite of all its delusive flourishes ; nevertheless, his breeding would not allow him to betray his feelings, and he heard his fate pronounced with exactly the same quiet dignity that had marked his demeanour on his entrance. He helped himself from the proffered box, and as gracefully deposited the powder in his nostrils as if he was eminently contented with the intimation that had been given him. The gentlemen then sneezed and blew their noses, and the manner in which each performed this difficult achievement was a study for a painter.

The art of handing a snuff box and of helping yourself to its contents might be acquired by any ordinary beau ; but the art of sneezing and blowing your nose was only thoroughly learned by the great masters of gentility. A curious contrast was observable in the styles in which these two finished gentlemen went through this trying experiment. There was a classic purity in the simplicity which characterised the performance

of the Brigadier, and a rich romance in that of his handsome associate. Each possessed merit ; if Brigadier Lepel sneezed like a heathen divinity, Handsome Hervey blew his nose like a hero of the Crusades.

There was a great triumph of breeding over feeling in the last proceeding of the visitor at Petersham Manor ; which was made more apparent in the wonderfully polite speech in which he expressed his regrets that an obstacle so serious should have intervened between the realization of the ambitious wish he had ventured to express, and in his assurances that the young lady would meet with an abundance of suitors in every way more desirable for her, as an alliance with so distinguished a character as Brigadier-General Lepel must be eagerly sought by the highest families in the kingdom.

Handsome Hervey concluded a most eloquent eulogy on the Brigadier and his incomparable daughter by rising from his chair, and offering his snuff-box. The manœuvre was one which no other man in the dominions of his Britannic Majesty could have effected with half the ease, or a tithe of the eloquence the Brigadier's visitor so conspicuously displayed. The latter sought to

rival it, as he rose and accepted the proffered courtesy; but his vanity must have been great, indeed—as it undoubtedly was—if he supposed he made more than a very slight approach towards it.

The two beaux again appeared as rivals in a very peculiar and delicate accomplishment; and though Handsome Hervey was at the time enduring the greatest indignity that a man of sensibility could suffer:—in being placed in the position of a rejected suitor—his unrivalled genius was never so conspicuously displayed, as in his elegant disposal of hat and stick in one hand, as he raised the other charged with ‘right Spanish’ to his nostrils;—with just that elevation of elbow, and curve of arm, which is the perfection of elegance in the arrangement of the principal members of the human form divine.

Nor must we forget his smile which seemed the most perfect mingling of refinement, satisfaction, and amiability; and this remained unchanged in its happy expression whilst he gave utterance to his unfeigned regret at being obliged to leave society so extremely agreeable to him. Of course his host pressed the stay of his visitor; and seemed greatly concerned at the idea of parting

with him. But the crowning act of this admirable ceremonial was the matchless style in which Handsome Hervey made his adieus, and performed his parting bow. The Brigadier bowed in unison; but his was merely a clever piece of courtesy:—his companion's was an inimitable work of art, which would at once and for ever have established his superiority in every drawing-room in the three kingdoms.

It is very possible that when Brigadier-General Lepel allowed his visitor to leave Petersham Manor, he believed that what had passed during the interview was known only to themselves. He was never more mistaken in his life. The reader should be informed that Mrs. Kitty had returned to her young mistress's service, as soon as she had been expelled from that of the Duke of Wharton, for having assisted in the escape of his fair prisoner; and that in this service she shewed herself as active and intelligent as any waiting-woman in the world.

The whole of the period in which the Brigadier and his visitor were together, she took care to possess the most correct information of what passed between them, through the convenient medium of the neighbouring key-hole. As soon

as she had obtained all the particulars respecting the interesting communication of her young lady's lover, and its unsatisfactory result, she lost no time in causing her mistress to be as well informed as herself.

Mary Lepel had thought a good deal of her very singular acquaintance with the handsome beau, whose effeminacy had once been so amusing to her, but whose extraordinary courage and intelligence, she had so lately had an opportunity of appreciating. His participation in her escape from the Duke of Wharton's house entitled him to her warmest gratitude; but the display he had afforded her of his extensive scholarship in the species of literature in which she so greatly delighted, and the gratification she had derived from it, left an impression on her heart of which so handsome and agreeable an associate might easily have taken advantage. In her mind he certainly more nearly approached Prince Oroondates than any person she had ever known; and when she heard the dexterity and courage he had since exhibited behind Montagu House—on her account too—his similarity to that distinguished individual seemed still more clearly established.

She was just considering the necessity there

seemed to exist for her falling desperately in love, when the startling communication of Mrs. Kitty at once gave the required impulse. Opposition was, of course, with such a romantic disposition as that of the young Maid of Honour, the very thing calculated to assist the views of her elegant lover; and when he was listening to her father's extremely civil rejection of his suit, he was little aware in how friendly a manner the Brigadier was acting towards him.

If Mary Lepel entertained any doubt of the truth of what the indefatigable Mrs. Kitty had told her, it was dispelled on her first interview with her father. The Brigadier believed his daughter had been brought up in habits of profound obedience to paternal authority, and he had not anticipated any difficulty in making her an agent in the fulfilment of his ambitious wishes; but Mary Lepel had read of heroines placed in circumstances very similar to her own, and shewed herself disposed to follow their example in insisting on the disposal of her own affections.

The Brigadier was not used to remonstrance, or opposition. He would not tolerate the slightest evasion of his commands. He bade her, somewhat peremptorily, prepare herself to receive

such a husband as he in his superior wisdom should think proper to select for her; rather sharply inquiring how such a child could know anything of such matters; and then he broke out into a most imposing oration, such as he was wont to deliver when standing up for the interests of Old Sarum in his seat in Parliament, on the strong necessity there existed for the young and inexperienced being guided by their seniors in matters so important to their own happiness.

Mary Lepel listened to every word in the attitude she had been taught by the careful Penelope Stiffandstern to attend to the communications of parents and guardians; but as soon as her father had done speaking, to his extreme surprise, she gave him to understand that however he was entitled to her duty, in matters of love it was well known every heroine was allowed to choose for herself; and as she had already bestowed her affections on a gentleman in every way calculated to do honour to her choice, it was quite unreasonable to expect she could entertain the pretensions of any other suitor.

As this was expressed in language worthy of Statira herself, the Brigadier's astonishment may easily be imagined. But his was not a nature to

allow a child of his to interfere with his plans for her advancement. Though a man remarkable for his civility and strict attention to decorum, he fell into a most unbecoming rage; and as she continued to insist that Handsome Hervey was the only person whose attentions she could tolerate, he showed himself inclined to be despotic as well as angry. They were in "young Madam's room" when this uncomfortable discussion took place—both had arose from their seats equally satisfied that the interview had lasted sufficiently long. The daughter was as cool and collected as it was possible for any young lady to be under circumstances so trying to the nerves; but the father was flushed, indignant, irritable, and excited, and showed every sign of being under the influence of a furious passion.

"I will have no trifling, Madam!" he exclaimed at last. "I insist upon your obedience, or will immediately take such measures as shall insure it."

"Sir," she replied with a most provoking calmness, "I shall be happy at all times to follow your wishes as far as their accomplishment may be within my power; but in this matter you must really excuse me."

“Zounds, Madam!” cried the Brigadier, getting more and more oblivious of his long established reputation for elegance. “Zounds, Madam, do you presume to oppose my wishes? But I’ll soon tame this spirit! I’ll lock you up, Madam—I’ll keep you on bread and water—I’ll prevent your seeing any one, or hearing from any one—I’ll—”

“You cannot prevent, Sir, my thinking of any one,” replied his daughter in the same quiet tone; “therefore whatever else you may do will be useless.”

“’Sdeath Madam, but we’ll see!” shouted the angry Brigadier as he left the room, and, all idea of civility forgot—banged the door after him.

Mary Lepel was alone, and a prisoner.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR HEROINE'S LAST ADVENTURE.

So well I'm known at Court,
None ask where Cupid dwells,
But readily resort,
To Bellenden's or Lepel's.

GAY.

HANDSOME HERVEY, when he left Petersham Manor, had no idea of giving up the pursuit of its fair mistress, notwithstanding the little respect in which his pretensions appeared to be regarded by her father. The rejection he had been forced to endure, to him seemed so marvellous, that he felt inclined to doubt the Brigadier's sanity ;—besides it was a thing which might do his reputation incalculable injury were it known. There was, however, he thought, one great consolation. No one in his senses could believe that so superlatively

handsome, and elegant a man, could have had such an indignity passed upon him.

He knew well enough, and none knew better, how many of the highest families in the kingdom were eagerly desirous of being connected with a gentleman of such unquestionable breeding. It therefore became incumbent on him to appeal to higher authority on the subject, and seek the counsel of the young lady herself. To his great astonishment and mortification, he found himself not only debarred access to her, but prevented holding the slightest communication with her. He soon learned she was a prisoner, and became fully aware of the obstacles he was likely to meet with, should he still endeavour to continue his suit. Nevertheless he did endeavour.

The serious misunderstanding between their young Madam and their master, was of course well known to all the establishment, and excited much discussion and no slight degree of interest below stairs. Rackstraw, the respectable butler, was reserved and dignified. He rarely trusted himself to speak on the subject; and when obliged to do so, exhibited a diplomatic ambiguousness that might have served as a model to all respectable butlers placed in similar delicate positions. Sandie

the Scotch gardener was equally cautious ; but such conduct found very little favour amongst their fellow-servants. The women were of course loud in their animadversions upon the Brigadier's tyranny. Mrs. Molly, whenever she was awake, becoming extremely energetic in favour of the rights of woman ; and Mrs. Kitty as plainly and decidedly allowed it to be known she wouldn't put up with such usage for all the hard hearted fathers in the 'varsal world. Pompey did not express his sentiments, unless they escaped him in the eloquent grins which he perpetrated whenever the subject was under discussion. John Coachman was indignant, and gave every one to understand that were he in the situation of his young mistress, he should slip his halter, and bolt on the first opportunity.

It was not long before the rejected suitor established communication with the garrison, and was made aware of everything relating to the prisoner. His next step was to communicate with the young lady ; and this, with their assistance, he succeeded in doing, despite the vigilance of the Brigadier.

It was necessary something should be done, as he learned that the Brigadier had received a visit

from his fair friend the great Duchess; that they had had a long conversation, which, though intended to be confidential, had in a great measure been betrayed through the agency of the keyhole, and that Mrs. Kitty was positive she had heard the Duchess recommend an immediate marriage. This alarming intelligence was confirmed to Mary Lepel by her father walking into her chamber and informing her, that he had resolved she should marry a gentleman he had selected—a highly desirable Duke in his dotage he had long had in his eye, and desiring her to prepare to meet his wishes in three days.

Nothing could equal the effect produced on all the parties most interested, by this despotic announcement. Our young heroine continually referred to the precedents established by other heroines under such very trying circumstances; for her only consideration was, would Cassandra, or Clelia, or any of her romantic acquaintances, have submitted to such a disposal of themselves. This question she soon learned to answer in the negative; and then came the important question, what was to be done to escape the hard fate designed for her?

The youthful Maid of Honour felt by this time

an attachment to the handsome Beau her father disapproved of, as sincere as her conviction that he was the complete *fac-simile* and living representative of the illustrious Prince Oroondates of her girlish dreams ; and was fully disposed to do justice to the ability and moral worth that existed under his affectation of intense coxcombry. In him, opposition had only served to excite in the most powerful manner the deep feeling of devotion which had taken the place of the admiration her beauty had created. Both were therefore as much in love with each other as they thought it was possible for them to be ; and did not fail to avail themselves of every opportunity presented to them of letting each other know the fervour of their attachment.

The Brigadier appeared to be in a restless state of vigilance. He put in force every precaution which the most sagacious fathers could have employed upon their contumacious daughters. He was constantly on the watch to baffle any designs from without ; he was indefatigable in his efforts to neutralise any intrigues from within. Nevertheless, the lovers communicated not only every day, but almost every hour of the day ; and the devices they had recourse to, to conceal their

correspondence, spoke as strongly in favour of their ingenuity as of their discretion.

It was very remarkable that all at once the party below stairs ceased to discuss the position of their young mistress. Rackstraw, the respectable butler, never allowed her name to pass his lips; and his prudence was copied by the Scotch gardener, and the tall footman, all of whom, the other party were well aware were employed by their master as spies upon her. The women were equally reserved—Mrs. Molly never opening her mouth except during her customary slumbers, and Mrs. Kitty assuming all the appearance of one who had entirely lost the use of the organs of speech.

John Coachman was evidently under great restraint. Taciturnity was not one of his virtues; from his intense desire to control his somewhat too pliant tongue, he smoked his pipe with his mouth screwed up as tightly as if it bore a padlock. Pompey, however, still continued his grin; indeed, he seemed bent on practising the art more industriously than ever.

There could be no doubt that there were two parties below stairs—one in the interest of the master, and the other in that of his daughter;

and they watched each other's motions, and weighed each other's words with most jealous attention.

The Maid of Honour had come to a determination worthy of so ardent an admirer of the peerless Statira; and Handsome Hervey had decided on an expedient, to which his illustrious prototype, Prince Oroondates, would in his position have gladly had recourse. There was evidently a crisis impending; for an unnatural restlessness seemed to pervade all the inmates of Petersham Manor. The Brigadier was more busy than usual; but, notwithstanding the most careful reference to keyholes, by means of eyes and ears, nothing could be positively ascertained by the active agents of his daughter, of the exact nature of his movements. They, however, had no doubt that he was making preparations for the threatened marriage.

This intelligence only rendered the fair prisoner more determined in her own measures. Nevertheless, she grew hourly more excited and restless; and as she took her last letter from her lover from out of the wax peach in which it had been conveyed to her, she read it with a feverish impatience which could be experienced only by so decided a heroine, so very decidedly in love.

We must beg leave to pass over a variety of little details that showed the extreme vigilance of the two parties into which the inmates of Peter-sham Manor were divided, and request the reader's company to a midnight watch outside the house. The night was as fine as myriads of stars could make it; there was no moon, but still there was sufficient light to enable any one possessed of tolerable good eyesight to see what he was about. Apparently every one in the Brigadier's mansion had retired to rest, for not a sound arose from it, and the only noise that disturbed the quiet of the scene was caused by the plaintive sighing of the wind among the tall trees that grew close to the house.

It was a little after twelve when a chariot, with four evidently very superior horses, was seen slowly creeping along the lane by the garden wall. It stopped, and a gentleman stepped cautiously out of the carriage. At the same moment the figure of a man was observed stealthily creeping from the shadow of the wall. A very few words passed between them in a low voice. The gentleman was Handsome Hervey; the other person was John Coachman. They proceeded together to the garden door that led out into the lane; the

man opened it, and kept guard there whilst the lover entered the garden. He was not long in making his way to the exact spot under the window of his mistress to which he had been directed, and flinging a few grains of light gravel against the panes, he waited with all a lover's anxiety for the result of his signal.

His quick ear soon caught the sound of an opening casement, notwithstanding it was pushed up by so practised a hand as that of Mrs. Kitty—another minute he received the end of a rope ladder—another minute, the well known figure of his mistress, closely hooded and cloaked, was fearlessly descending its friendly spokes—another minute and he felt the quick beating of her heart as he clasped her in his arms.

“Oh my beloved!” exclaimed the enraptured lover in a thrilling whisper, “a life devoted to securing your happiness is the only return I can make for the bliss of this moment.”

“Could a reward be more ample?” asked the enamoured heroine in the same low tone. “But let it suffice that I am yours for ever. No earthly power can now divide us.”

“Not so fast, mistress!” exclaimed a stern voice; and to the consternation of the lovers the

figure of the Brigadier emerged from the shadow in which he had been concealed, and stood before them.

What a dreadful interruption was this to the dream of happiness into which the sensitive and romantic Mary Lepel had momentarily fallen. It came so sudden and was so heavy a blow that it appeared to produce a stunning effect upon all her faculties. Her lover mechanically put his hand to his sword, but the recognition of the parent of his beloved as he observed three men in the Lepel livery approaching from the neighbouring trees, who were the butler and his two fellow servants, quickly convinced him of the folly and uselessness of resistance.

"Perhaps my Lord Hervey will do me the honour to accompany me," said the Brigadier in his most stately manner. "I must show your Lordship before we part, how Brigadier General Lepel treats the man who seeks to rob him of his daughter."

The beau bowed as if he had received some extraordinary favour, and readily followed the incensed father, as he, taking the arm of his unresisting daughter, proceeded to the house door. Poor Mary Lepel! She bent her steps mechani-

cally in the direction in which she was led, and the silence and darkness in which the whole house was wrapped seemed to cast an additional shadow on a spirit already more than sufficiently gloomy. Surely never was any heroine so unhappy—surely never had the most troubled of them all suffered so cruel a disappointment.

The Brigadier passed through the hall. It was here dark as pitch, and silent as the grave. He strode on, and the lovers could scarce help anticipating some terrible catastrophe. He stopped suddenly. The doors of the amber room were as suddenly thrown open. In another moment the astonished and bewildered pair found themselves in the midst of a numerous assemblage in all the gay splendour of a bridal party, in a well lighted apartment evidently prepared, like the company, for the performance of the marriage ceremony. There was what appeared to be an altar at one end of the room, where stood, in his surplice, a dignitary of the church, holding the prayer book before him. There were the usual bridesmaids and bridesmen, evidently selected from the noblest and loveliest in the land; and there was a most imposing array of distinguished friends.

Handsome Hervey knew not what to make of

so unexpected a scene. He stood with his hat in his hand the very picture of one who had ignorantly intruded into a scene where he was not wanted. But Mary Lepel at once divined the dreadful meaning of all these gay preparations—the hateful marriage with which she had been threatened was about to take place. A well known voice now roused her from her unhappy reflections.

“Oh, mine tear Matam Lepel, vot von liddel vool you is looking!” exclaimed the Prince of Wales with a hearty laugh as he approached her. “I am gome to gompliment you, and mine vife is gome, and your goot vriend the Duchess of Marlborough is gome, and Villip Dormer is gome, and Gurnel Argyle is gome, and his abhominable pride Mary Pellenden that vas, is gome, and ve is all gome to gompliment you on your marriage, mine little tear.”

The Princess now stepped forward, and, to the increasing astonishment of her half alarmed, half confused Maid of Honour, her Royal Highness, not without visible agitation, took her hand and placed it in that of her lover. No one dreamed of the great sacrifice she was making, for the handsome beau had made an impression on her heart,

which though she could not destroy, she could guard against, and in conjunction with the Duchess of Marlborough, she had prevailed on the Brigadier to sanction the marriage of his daughter, which ceremony, on his discovering the proposed elopement, he had arranged should take place the same evening in the presence of the friends of the bride and bridegroom.

“You ought to be shamed of yourself,” said the Prince, addressing Handsome Hervey, “to be running away vid Molly Lepel, ven Dormer is dying vor her, Peterborough is sighing vor her, der Dukes of Zommerzet and Buckingham is trying vor her, and mineself and everypody else is crying vor her ready to break our hearts. Oh you littel zly rogue!” he added, turning to Mary Lepel. “You is a tousand times more blague dan brofit to us all. I shall banish you as I mean to banish dat rogue Madam Bellenden for running away vid Gurnel Argyle, der virst time I catch her in der dark.”

“*Ma foi!*” exclaimed that young lady in her usual gay manner, “Your Royal Highness should have availed yourself of the opportunity I allowed you when I kept you so completely in the dark respecting my marriage.”

“For my part,” observed Fanny Meadows in a whisper to the Duchess of Bolton, “I think all this fuss about marriage extremely improper.”

“Arrah now, honey, what ails ye?” exclaimed the Duchess, loud enough to attract general attention. “What is it you know about it improper? Faith now, I’m thinking may be some day or other, ye’ll be afther finding marriage not only proper, but mighty convanient.”

The Brigadier enjoyed the confusion of the lovers, and was well pleased he had been persuaded by his friend the Duchess of Marlborough to be satisfied with the high position and noble fortune of his daughter’s suitor. As the heir of the Earl of Bristol she convinced him Lord John Hervey was a most unexceptionable match, and the favour he enjoyed at Court was another most powerful recommendation. The Brigadier was a vain man, and his vanity found ample food in observing the consideration in which his lovely heiress was held by the distinguished guests, who at the instigation of his early patroness he had caused to be invited to grace his daughter’s unexpected nuptials.

The Wits thronged towards the young couple, every one with some jest worthy of the occa-

sion :—Philip Dormer, the Earl of Peterborough, the Dukes of Kingston, Somerset, and Buckingham, Mr. Secretary Craggs, ay, even the Duke of Wharton, with the easiest assurance in the world, came forward to express his felicitations. Handsome Hervey, as soon as his first surprise was over, received the courtesies of his friends with an air worthy of his great reputation ; and the Maid of Honour, as her attention was directed towards him, felt perfectly satisfied that Prince Oroondates himself, in such a situation could not have appeared to greater advantage.

They were married ; and all the poets, and all the wits about town rushed into print to celebrate their nuptials. Philip Dormer forgot his rivalry in a long congratulatory copy of verses, of which we can here only find room for the following :—

Bright Venus yet never saw bedded,
So perfect a beau and a belle ;
As when Hervey, the Handsome, was wedded,
To the beautiful Molly Lepel.

Of the writer, we have only to add, that he pursued his career at Court with a success worthy of his great abilities ; that he married the daughter of the Duchess of Kendal, and succeeding to the

title of Earl of Chesterfield, became known as the author of a work bearing his name, that has ever since been esteemed a text book on the study of gentility.

The eccentric Earl of Peterborough continued for many years to amaze the town with his extravagances:—one of the last being his marriage with a public singer—the beautiful Anastasia Robinson, whom he espoused when somewhere about midway between his seventieth and eightieth year. The profligate Duke of Wharton, after exhausting all the resources of the most reckless dissipation, embraced the cause of the Pretender; became a scandal and a wonder wherever he appeared, and ultimately turned devotee. From the presidential seat of the Hell Fire Club, to the cell of a recluse; from the imperial throne of the Mohocks, to the self-denying example of a brotherhood of monks, was a change so extraordinary, as to be almost incredible. Nevertheless, the licentious, the reckless, the infamous Duke of Wharton, died in the habit of the Monks of St. Bernard, and was buried as a brother of the order in the Church of Poblet.

We must pass over many of the inferior cha-

racters in this story, as their after histories presented no remarkable feature worthy of chronicling. Of the Maids of Honour, the prudish Fanny Meadows remained a prude to the end of her life ; a great part of which she enjoyed the character of an old maid, and supported it with singular ability. The imprudent Sophy Howe, we regret to say, met with a fate still more deplorable :—she discovered too late, the deception that had been practised upon her, and finding that nothing was to be expected from an appeal to the honour of her seducer, she pined away overwhelmed with a sense of misery and shame, and in a very few years died of a broken heart.

The wife of Colonel Argyle had frequent cause of congratulating herself on the convincing proof she had given of her inaccessibility to the arguments of a Prince, though they had taken so sterling a shape. Her indecorous treatment of a royal cocked hat often amused her in after years, when the duties of a matron filled her mind, to the exclusion of all those accomplishments which she had once so highly prized as the result of her “finishing” in France.

Lastly, our heroine, the favourite Maid of Honour, became as universally appreciated as a wife and a mother, as she had been admired as a beauty. But some how or other she contrived in a very short time after her marriage to divest her mind of all those romantic impressions which had found place there. Her favourite heroines faded from her memory, as her affection for her husband increased; and even the much quoted Prince Oroondates was forgotten before her first infant was a month old. As the wife of a nobleman so distinguished as Lord John Hervey, she held a brilliant position in society, where her beauty long remained a theme worthy the genius of the first poets of the age, inspiring even the muse of a Voltaire.

Of Lord Hervey we have only to add that he continued to be remarkable for many effeminate affectations, which drew upon him the satire of Pope, who under the names of "Sporus" and "Lord Fanny" thought proper to hold him up to public ridicule; but Lord Hervey possessed literary talents, which made him almost a match for "the wicked wasp of Twickenham," and replied to the attack in lines, which if not as vigorous as

those of his vindictive adversary, were quite as caustic. He was also a patron of literature, and in that light Dr. Myddleton addressed to him the dedication of his "Life of Cicero."

We had nearly forgotten two or three individuals whose influence, if not their merit, requires that we should not dismiss them without a few words at parting. We, of course, allude to George I. and his extremely unprepossessing mistresses. The years that had passed had not brought peace to the disturbed mind of that Hanoverian sovereign—quite otherwise, he was still frequently in open hostility with his son, and the Princess had the misfortune also to excite his ill feelings. Every succeeding year found him in a state of greater restlessness, haunted by an undefinable dread of evil, which sometimes took the shape of an apprehension of his fair prisoner escaping, and sometimes of her dying. Both contingencies in his conception being equally dreadful; for in the first he saw nothing but civil war and bloodshed; and in the second he fancied he foresaw certain death; for it subsequently transpired that many years since, some person possessed of considerable reputation in the oc-

cult sciences had prophesied that the King's death would follow within a year of that of his Consort ; and notwithstanding the severity of his treatment of that unfortunate Princess, the slightest rumour of her being indisposed filled him with the most intense alarm. As he grew older, the immediate probability of such a catastrophe grew stronger, and coupled with the deep remorse he experienced for the injustice he had done her, his fears became so predominant that he existed in a state of nervous irritability of the most pitiable description.

Some seven years after the date of the marriage of our hero and heroine, those charming favourites the Schulenburg and the Kielmansegge were sitting together one quiet evening in the apartments in the palace, in which they had so long been domiciled ; the former uglier and thinner than ever, and more than ever devoted to abstruse homilies and prolonged sermons ; the latter uglier and fatter than ever, and more than ever devoted to her favourite black bottle of Schiedam, which on the present occasion failed not to fill its accustomed place.

"It is my only comfort your Highness," exclaimed the Countess of Darlington pathetically,

as she tossed off the contents of a long Dutch glass. The reader must now learn that the Duchess of Kendal had recently, by her illustrious lover, been raised to the dignity of a Princess of Eberstein.

“Fie, Countess!” cried her Highness in a pious horror, “’tis your soul that wants comfort, your precious soul that—”

Here the two old ladies were suddenly interrupted by the violent bursting in of the door, and the entrance of the King, apparently under some dreadful excitement, for his face was pale, his eyes staring, and his dress disordered. He rushed to his usual seat, but though the paper and the scissors were there as usual, his manufacture of figures stood still; the King threw himself into his seat, and buried his face in his hands. He was evidently deeply moved at something. The Princess of Eberstein rose to take care of her lover, and at the same time the Countess of Darlington rose to take care of her Schiedam.

“What is the matter with your Majesty?” exclaimed the Princess soothingly, “I fear something unpleasant has occurred.”

“It surely must have been a dream!” exclaimed

the King, looking wildly around, "yet I was awake in my cabinet, sitting alone, when suddenly I saw—"

The King stopped, a spasm of horror seemed to seize his frame, his knees shook violently, his face was colourless, and his eyes fixed.

"Baron Bothmar!" cried the groom of the chambers. The door was opened, and in a dress soiled with travel, and, evidently greatly fatigued and excited, the Baron hastily advanced into the apartment. He stopped before the King, who started up at the announcement of his name, and with open mouth and staring eye-balls glared at his visitor, as though he regarded his appearance there as an indication of evil tidings he dared not ask and dreaded to learn.

"Sire," said the Baron, in a low voice, "she is dead!"

The intelligence fell upon the King like a thunderbolt; he dropped down in a swoon with a sharp cry of mingled horror and anguish. He was presently carried to his own chamber, and the best medical attendance was soon in requisition; but for a considerable time the skill of the physicians was of little avail. The patient raved

in a manner that astonished as much as it alarmed his attendants ; sometimes denouncing his own conduct as that of a brutal tyrant persecuting an innocent woman, sometimes rambling about a prophecy that seemed pregnant to him with mystery and death.

In the course of a few months, by the unremitting attention of his physicians, he was so far recovered as to be able to travel ; and he commanded preparations to be made as expeditiously as possible for a journey to Hanover. His impatience to reach the Electorate became so great, that it was feared his disorder would return. It was in vain his ministers strove to direct his attention to the pressing affairs of the kingdom ; he would attend to nothing, he could attend to nothing save his journey to Hanover. His excitement on this subject became extraordinary, and his countenance assumed a wildness of expression that startled the courtiers.

The King set off for Hanover, accompanied by the Princess of Eberstein ; but on their landing in Holland they shortly afterwards were forced to separate, and the King had to continue his journey alone. He was evidently under no common ex-

citement; some strange impulse appeared to be directing him forward; he looked wildly and muttered unintelligibly, and was uneasy and anxious to an extent that excited much alarm in his suite.

He was absorbed in the reflections of remorse, calling before his mind the sufferings that, during an unjust imprisonment of no less than thirty-two years, he had caused his lovely and accomplished wife, the hapless Princess Sophia Dorothea, to endure. Though convinced of her innocence of the charges her relentless enemies had brought against her, he was so completely the slave of his mistresses, as to be afraid to act upon those convictions; and now the full extent of his own wicked life represented itself before him in the revolting colours that belonged to it. He groaned in spirit—the goadings of remorse seemed to make him writhe like a trodden worm.

Suddenly a hand was protruded through the window of the chariot in which the King was proceeding at full speed, and a letter was presented to him. He did not see the messenger, he had not heard him; he had been absorbed in his own dreadful thoughts, and had neither eyes nor ears

for external objects. The King eagerly seized the packet with a nervous clutch, and the hand disappeared. The letter was directed to him, and sealed with a black seal. His limbs trembled, and his hands shook so, he could scarcely retain his hold of the paper, as, on recognising the hand-writing, he tore it open. He read as follows :

“I, Sophia Dorothea of Zelle, true and lawful wife of George Lewis, King of England and Elector of Hanover, do hereby summon you, the said George Lewis, to appear to answer for all the crimes, wrongs, insults and indignities, heaped upon the said Sophia Dorothea, heretofore the faithful wife, and the fond mother of your children, whilst you gave yourself up to all kinds of profligacy, folly and wickedness, and abide the verdict of the great and just Judge, in his eternal Court, on the 11th day of the month of June, in the year of our Lord 1727.

“From my death-bed, in my prison in the Castle of Ahlden, in the 32nd year of my imprisonment.

“ SOPHIA DOROTHEA.”

As the King read the last words of this awful citation, the paper fell from his grasp; his eye became glassy, a stroke of paralysis contorted his features—he gasped, he clutched at the air—his tongue protruded from his mouth; his head fell back against the carriage; and when the horses were stopped at the next stage, and the attendants came to the door of the chariot, they found him a corpse.

Thus, according to a trustworthy account, ended the career of the first of our Hanoverian sovereigns; following his hapless Consort in a period so brief, that in the minds of the superstitious there could be no question about the accomplishment of the prophecy which had given him so much uneasiness. Of course, the decease of their patron was the dispersion of his particularly ugly harem; for his successor had too lively a sense of the obligations he was under to “*der anterderloovian grockodiles*” to allow them any longer to disgrace the palace.

Of the Prince we need only say, that his first regal act, was the seizure of his father’s will, and its immediate destruction. Notwithstanding the ill omen of such a proceeding

at the commencement of his reign, George II. shewed himself a much more respectable character than his predecessor. Fortunately for him, however, he allowed his clever and amiable Consort to exercise considerable influence over him; and as long as she lived, he was respected. One of the first acts of Queen Caroline was to summon her late favourite Maid of Honour, Lady Hervey, and place her in a highly honourable position about her person, whilst her husband was appointed to an equally honourable post in the service of the King.

THE END.

LONDON:

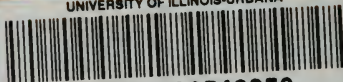
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